



CLARA LEICESTER.

A NOVEL.

BY

CAPTAIN G. DE LA POER BERESFORD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1858.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

J. Billing, Printer, 103, Hatton Garden, London, and Guildford, Surrey.

CLARA LEICESTER.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH OF LORD CLEMENTSFORD—THE WILL.

AN event was rapidly approaching which would plunge Lady Grace in the deepest distress. No hope existed that the life of Lord Clementsford could be much prolonged. Indeed, it was scarcely charitable to cherish any wish to that effect, after the extreme sufferings his Lordship had lately endured. Three paralytic strokes had followed each other with such alarming rapidity, as to induce the medical attendants, in accord-

ance with their professional responsibility, to inform Lady Grace that her father's recovery was hopeless.

There are some natures whose characteristics are brought out so favourably in presence of affliction, that it would seem as if their proper sphere of action was in the stern and gloomy duties of this life. With ordinary persons, the energies flag, the spirits droop, and perception becomes clouded in contact with calamity. But the former natures are strengthened in proportion as the danger by which they are confronted becomes deeper and more menacing. Lady Grace was one of this rare class.

Lord Clementsford lingered in a melancholy state, entirely confined to his bed. He was incapable of any exertion whatever. It was with difficulty he could concentrate his thoughts sufficiently to appreciate the admirable reading of his daughter, which had now become her constant occupation on an evening.

How few are able to read aloud without obscuring the sense and vitiating the style of their author! Lady Grace, on the contrary, by her intuitive perception of the subtlest meaning of a profound writer, and her quick enjoyment of the recondite graces of his diction, threw a light over what she read, and fully exhibited "the dainties that are bred in a book." The almost spherical harmonies of great poetry, and its "golden cadences," lost nothing by the utterance of her voice, which conferred equal justice on the less obvious modulation of fine prose. By the thoughtful investigation she bestowed on all subjects, she detected a sympathy between musical notes in harmonious combination, and the still nobler concord arising from words when they move in the transporting numbers of Shakespeare and Milton. She could trace, among some of the mighty thoughts of Mozart and Beethoven, a similitude even to passages in the "Lear" of Shakespeare and in the aspiring grandeur of

the great epic of Milton ; while in the best works of Dussek, and a few of the “ Songs without Words ” of Mendelssohn, she imagined a remote echo might be caught of the “ Allegro ” and “ Penseroso,” and of the delicate fairy fancies in “ The Midsummer Night’s Dream.” She knew, moreover, that this analogy was capable of being extended to the productions of classical painters and sculptors, where *harmony* is as requisite as in the sister arts of music and poetry.

Lady Grace, with much good sense, selected, according to the phases of her father’s illness, the subjects most adapted to excite and please his attention. At first, she perseveringly read the debates from the newspapers, which must have fatigued her excessively. Subsequently, as her father got worse, and sank lower, she found it necessary to substitute lighter and less wearisome subjects ; and finally, nothing but gossiping anecdotes and trivial paragraphs could

in the slightest degree amuse him, or reach his comprehension.

Previously to the last stroke of paralysis, Lord Clementsford had preserved the use of his right arm and hand, and could sit up, his intellect remaining untouched. He therefore occupied himself with writing, and appeared quite resigned to whatever might ensue. During the last two months, however, he had not only lost the use of his limbs, but his faculties were perceptibly impaired.

Why linger over this sad scene? A month more of suffering on his part, and of assiduous attention on the part of a loving daughter, brought the struggle between life and death to a melancholy end.

Lord Clementsford was now no more. And Grace, who had closed her parent's eyes, remained the heiress of his titles and estates. By the world she was thought of only as the inheritress of vast wealth: to herself, she

was merely a wretched orphan—desolate and alone.

The blow was an overwhelming one. The gloomy details of interment—those sudden, mysterious and bewildering preparations for committing to earth one who only yesterday lived and breathed with us—were laid before her; nay, more, she was compelled to undergo official visits from persons in high authority to ascertain her wishes as to the funeral. All this would have been too much for many in her peculiar position to bear; and very few of her age and sex would have been able, with similar clearness, to comprehend the necessity of such interviews, and to grant them with such entire self-possession. Tenderness and firmness are not incompatible.

Lady Grace explicitly announced that until the late Lord Clementsford's Will was opened, and it should be ascertained whether he had expressed any wishes as to the manner of his

interment, she could not possibly offer her own suggestions or personal desires on the melancholy subject.

The following day was fixed for the inspection of his Lordship's last Testament ; and then, the personages interested being assembled, and the legal processes and forms having been fulfilled, the Will was opened, and read aloud. All doubt as to the obsequies was now solved. Lord Clementsford expressly desired that his remains should be conveyed to his country-seat, and interred in a vault beneath the rustic church, in the most private manner possible.

Various sums were bequeathed to various persons ; and some military mementoes and relics were given to certain companions in arms. His faithful servants, together with a few old soldiers of the humbler ranks, were not forgotten, and a bequest was made to each of his nieces by marriage, namely, the Duchess of Ellingfield and Mrs. Leicester. But the legacy

to the latter was larger in amount than that to the former.

But now there came a curious passage, which attracted the attention of all; and even the grief of Grace was suspended for a moment, so struck was she at the sound of new and foreign names in connection with a very large bequest.

The "item" in question commenced thus:

"I bequeath the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds to a much-injured person—Conscia Dalzell, commonly called La Marchesa di Salvatierra, of Seville. None but my beloved daughter, Grace, to whom I confide the history of this unfortunate person, should ever become acquainted with all the particulars of this sad tale. But, relying on her sound sense and high principles, I leave a packet for her; the contents of which she may so far make use of as, in her discretion, may seem fit. The packet lies in the large desk, together with certain articles of great

value ; all which I leave as a souvenir to my afore-said truly-prized and beloved daughter, Grace.

“ The military orders and distinctions that do not, as a matter of course, return to my sovereign, I also leave to her. And my last wish is, that no military honours be accorded to my remains, which I desire may be deposited in the vault at Clementsford.

“ God forgive me, and bless and protect my daughter !”

These were the chief features of the Will.

Arrangements were now made, in conformity with the instructions of the testator, to remove Lord Clementsford's remains into the country, whither Grace resolved to retire. The town-house was therefore shut up—a hatchment was placed in centre of the edifice ; and the closed windows soon ceased to attract the notice of passers-by, who at first were surprised at the dark and deserted appearance of this splendid mansion.

CHAPTER II.

REPULSE OF THE DUCHESS—STRANGE REVELATIONS.

THE Duchess of Ellingfield was not slow in obeying the wishes of her husband, as expressed in the former volume, and which were so much in accordance with her own. The prospect of possessing these interesting Spaniards as her guests—and she their chaperone—formed to her imagination a series of triumphs in the world of fashion. It promised quite a brilliant future,

and seemed, in anticipation, to ensure great successes, and realise her ambitious views.

Having ordered her carriage to be brought round directly, she proceeded at once to the indicated address.

When she arrived, another carriage was at the door ; The servants were in black ; the equipage itself was very dark, and no other heraldic emblazonment was on it than an Earl's coronet.

But her Grace's disappointment was very keen when the "Not at home" was reported to her anxious ears.

"Take up my card," said she ; "they will of course see me."

Still the reply was "Not at home."

"Tell them I am the Duchess of Ellingfield," said her Grace, feeling confident that those words would be an irresistible *passe-partout*.

A most polite, but positive, refusal of admittance was again tendered, acquainting her

Grace that the ladies were not at home to any visitors.

“Then, pray, whose is that carriage?” interrogated the Duchess.

“The Countess of Clementsford’s,” was the reply.

For the first moment of her life the Duchess was jealous of her cousin Grace. She felt—and that like a flash of lightning—that her unpretending cousin was superior to her in worldly importance. Such a thought had never before entered her mind ; the question of mental superiority had never been reflected upon ; and, for the first time in her life, she perceived her cousin preferred to herself. With an instinctive dread, she instantly conceived that this enormous heiress might be a more interesting object in the world than herself—even than the Duchess of Ellingfield ! She was, therefore, in no placid mood when she replied to the question, “Where will your Grace be taken ?”

“Home,” was the prompt, but not soft reply.

The excitement of the Duchess totally caused her to forget the peculiarity—the more than extraordinary coincidence — of the carriage of Grace Dalzell being at the door of her Spanish friends.

Leaving her Grace to digest this *contretemps*, we must enter the house just left, and in it find the Countess of Clementsford, with Ursula, and Conschia di Salvatierra.

Some six months had now passed since the death of the late Lord Clementsford, and his heiress had, since then, much to perform, many stirring scenes to undergo.

In the first weeks of her deep mourning she had perused the packet bequeathed to her by her father. It contained a strange tale, revealing to her that she possessed a sister. It proved clearly that the Conschia di Salvatierra, mentioned in Lord Clementsford’s

will, was his natural daughter, and her own sister.

The details were mostly what has already been related in a former part of these pages. The English Colonel, who had been left behind in Cadiz, and who fled with the *Marcheza di Salvatierra*, became afterwards the celebrated General, Earl of Clementsford.

There were a few—very few—outpourings of self-reproach and conscience-stricken reminiscences, when the writing mentioned the man who had been so grievously wronged in early youth. But generally, with regard to the *Marquez di Salvatierra*, there was a hurry in the relation as if some compunctious feeling had restrained all allusion to one, so deeply injured, in a document that was meant as a reparation in a certain manner ; and which, at any rate, was destined for the eyes and information of one so pure as Grace.

Had not this information been derived from

such a sacred source—had not the tomb itself added its impression to the revelation—there was so much romantic mystery, such stirring incidents, unlike the every day relation of man's life, that Grace herself might have doubted the whole story as a fabrication for a novel. But receiving the communication as she did from the hands of her dying father, she could in no way doubt the truth of the painful history.

The manuscript was a diary of his early years ; so varied in adventure, that the theatre wherein it was enacted, appeared to have added a mystic influence to the dark and sombre incidents.

The newspapers at the time echoed and re-echoed Lord Clementsford's services. His military life had been most exciting ; there was ever in his public duty, a daring gallantry and enthusiastic ardour which could well account for varied phases in his private career. The battles were enumerated—the personal encounters and

wounds almost counted. The time those wounds detained him in Cadiz was stated. But what a tale could have been inserted here ! Conflicting leading articles disputed his great capacity as a leader ; but all were unanimous as to his eager thirst for glory, and his facile power of moulding rough men's energies to the requirements of war.

But Lord Clementsford had passed away. The gallant defender of his country had left to younger and more energetic successors, the duty he so conscientiously had performed.

At length the time arrived when Lady Clementsford felt called upon to act. The delicate mission entrusted to her must be performed, even were it to cost her the personal inconvenience of a voyage to Spain.

She contrived, through the medium of the Spanish consul in London, to obtain some direct information as to the customs and manners of the people in whom she now became so

interested. Shortly after, she had many interviews with people of Spanish importance in town, and from them gleaned the most desirable intelligence.

Beyond a doubt the residence of the Marchesa di Salvatierra could be traced up to a few years past ; and it would be easy to discover for a certainty her actual abode. Grace ultimately succeeded in obtaining a positive clue ; and, with the assistance of legal opinion, she learnt no possible advantage could be derived from her own voyage to Spain. More advice convinced her that her duty was to place the affair in the lawyers' hands, and thus ease her mind of all responsibility. To one like her, this consideration was of trivial value. Her indefatigable zeal in endeavouring to carry out her father's wishes to the very letter, was not slackened by the intimation that all action legally was to her impracticable.

Her course, then, became evident. A friendly

and affectionate demonstration, on her part, should take place.

She accordingly wrote, as she was fully capable of doing, a most delicate and judicious letter to her new-found sister, inviting her to England, as it became absolutely necessary, by the English law, that she must sign certain papers in *propria personâ*.

All necessary explanations were at the same time conveyed to the mother; and Lady Clementsford now felt secure that this branch of her duty was placed in the right path of speedy and correct execution.

She at length had time for reflection. There was her cousin, Mrs. Leicester's case; and to it she now turned her thoughts. Where was she? How should Grace discover her present abode?

It had been her project to bring about Mrs. Leicester's marriage with Lord Sidney Tresham. She had, in her mind, made every preliminary arrangement; and, as she fondly imagined, no-

thing now remained but to make the proposition to Tresham himself. For, though Clara was still missing, Lady Clementsford doubted not that her hiding-place would soon be discovered.

She too well knew that money to Tresham was the most essential of all his wants ; and, to administer to this, she determined, out of her ample means, to increase the bequest left to Clara by her father, so as to supply a sum sufficient for their utmost exigency ; and thus, it would appear, as if she was in no way concerned in the pecuniary part of the business. In addition to the above munificence, she considered, from the peculiar engagement she had previously formed with Tresham, that his debts became hers, and must be by her discharged.

Clara Leicester, who had been rescued from almost starvation by Grace some months previously, and who had flown, as the Countess believed, to hide herself and newly-born illegitimate offspring, was now in lodgings

in the neighbourhood of Kensington, with the faithful Mrs. Gellscrust.

It would be very absurd to suppose that Lady Clementsford had quenched all her former feelings, but she had arrived at a state of peace which no earthly consolation could have afforded. Indeed, it was well for her that she had shown no hesitation at the beginning. There was the danger. Every instant of wavering would have shaken her resolution, and perhaps brought her to that state of mind where decision and duty might have been disregarded.

But it was a terrible trial to resign so much. So unaccustomed had she been to a free intercourse with the world—to a communion of soul, or sympathy of ideas—that of course she magnified, in an exaggerated manner, the happiness she felt when Tresham had first obtained her love and confidence.

She then had found what her heart had hitherto been a stranger to, and had pictured to

herself the brightest of futures. Having once given her love without reserve, she had looked over all her lover's former faults—all delinquencies that could possibly be attributed to him.

In reviewing the matter now, she perceived that she had been premature in not having waited to learn more of Tresham's heart and character before she engaged herself to him.

Time flew on ; and, after frequent interchange of letters, the Marchesa di Salvatierra, and Ursula arrived in England. A house had been prepared for them in London by Grace, and to it they immediately proceeded.

It was very soon after their arrival that the Duke of Ellingfield learned the fact, and imparted it to his wife.

The meeting of Lady Clementsford and her new-found sister was as cordial as if they had known each other all their lives. They soon decided that until all legal observances were fulfilled, and their limited mourning over, it

were better to see no one, or form any new acquaintances.

It was for this reason that admittance had been refused to the Duchess of Ellingfield.

CHAPTER III.

RENEWED INTERVIEW BETWEEN GRACE AND
TRESHAM.

It may be remembered that, in the last interview which Grace had with Lord Sidney Tresham, she had dismissed him with the promise of a future meeting. This promise she fully intended to keep ; but various circumstances had prevented its accomplishment. Firstly, indeed, the very grave circumstances of Clara's position had diverted her attention from the main point—which was nothing less than

a promotion of Clara's marriage with Lord Sidney—to the vital necessity of immediately affording relief, not only in an ample, but also a useful manner. It has been seen that this was fully accomplished, though Clara's sudden and secret disappearance seemed to frustrate all that Grace had desired to effect.

Then her father's illness and death, and the strange history his will divulged (which had involved her in so many unexpected and elaborate duties), monopolized Grace's activity in another direction, and delayed the long-contemplated appointment with Tresham.

It was strange that his Lordship himself had been so patient. But the death of the Earl of Clementsford held out such golden hopes to his ambition, that he fondly fancied any act of delicacy on his part would be fully appreciated by Grace.

The Spanish relations being now settled in England, and Grace having learned in her inter-

view with Greville that Clara was safe and living with the respectable family in whose house he lodged (as related by Greville in the last chapter of our preceding volume), Lady Clementsford had time to think of Tresham, and of the second interview she had promised to grant him. She accordingly wrote a guarded letter to him, appointing a time and place of meeting, though she in no way alluded to the purport of her intended communication.

The appointed day and hour arrived, and Lord Sidney once more entered the mansion whose sombre portals had been but lately reopened, the possession of which he ardently coveted and fully reckoned on at no very remote period. It was with such feelings, but no other, that he crossed the threshold of a house lately hallowed by the self-denying devotion of a daughter to her dying parent.

Let us pause to reflect upon Grace's emotions

before we describe that important interview which was to decide the fate of more than one human being.

It is already known that it was under no weak and fond relapse towards a first and true passion that Grace had sought this interview. No; she was actuated by a firm and deep resolve to make the man she had once loved expiate his fault, redeem his treachery by a lawful union with his victim, and thus restore himself in some degree to the esteem of her to whom he had previously paid his addresses. Such was the disinterested desire—the sole ambition—of Grace.

But at what a sacrifice was she to attain this! The yearnings of a true heart are not easily stifled. The dream of love and hope in a peculiarly sensitive disposition cannot be forever crushed without many a pang. In order that justice might be accorded to another woman, she repelled the pure, earnest, intense aspirations

of her own heart. By a self-imposed sentence was she immolated.

Nearly all of us know the reflux of feeling in a tender and unquenched sentiment, when the very presence of its object is sufficient to overthrow the barriers we have placed against future encroachments. Lady Clementsford had to contend, not only against all ordinary advances of this nature, but against an unusually acute susceptibility, which made the struggle almost one of life and death :

“ The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept ; and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew,
Were changed to a blight.”*

Clothed in the deepest mourning, Grace entered the saloon into which Tresham had already been conducted. She received him with the hospitable dignity natural to her, but which

* Shelley.

her visitor attributed to the impulse of a tender emotion.

There was a pause ; for when is there not a pause at the commencement of a meeting at which some grave purpose is to be discussed ?

Grace was the first to break the painful silence. She thanked Tresham for coming ; but this met with so eager and impassioned a response as to create an embarrassing awkwardness between the two. Lady Clementsford, however, betrayed no outward excitement.

“ Lord Sidney,” she said, “ I am much obliged by your visit. When last we met, if you remember, I was compelled to terminate our conversation in rather an abrupt manner. A painful occurrence caused me to promise another interview between you and me, though, at the time, this very circumstance forbade my prolonging our interview. I am glad, however, to feel certain that no cause for anxiety any longer

exists in reference to the subject which at that period was so distressing. Every obstacle now appears likely to be surmounted; and I trust that affairs will terminate according to the wishes of all parties."

"Your words assure me you are kind as ever," replied Lord Sidney; "and no person can be more delighted than I am at the successful termination of scenes that brought so much misery to us all, and which now are bygones, and need no longer be alluded to. The happy present is our own, and a blissful future is, I trust, before us."

"The future is indeed before us, and the present is our own," rejoined Grace, omitting Tresham's epithets. "But," added she, with a countenance more sedate, if not severe, than her companion liked, "I at one time feared that events would not have come about so favourably as we ourselves could desire."

These last words reassured Tresham, as

was evident in the glance of pleasure which darted from his eyes. Lady Clementsford perceived this, and was at a loss to comprehend its meaning.

“The present is indeed our own,” reiterated she, “and we should make the most of it. The past, I hope (for we all have had some trials lately), has produced in us a change for the better; and now, having perceived how impossible it is for us to control our destinies, we should accept with gratitude and resignation the lot that Heaven has sent us.”

Resignation! that word struck Tresham as not being exactly the term for a bride elect to use in reference to her future husband; for he still remained under the delusion that this meeting was preliminary to his union with the heiress. He would not, however, suffer a solitary expression to disconcert him, but, in a tone of rapture, exclaimed—

“I cannot see you so changed since our last

interview without feeling gratitude and transport.

Accept, I pray you——”

“ Oh,” interrupted Grace, “ you mistake me. I never have changed since——”

She paused, and Tresham interpreted her silence into embarrassment on confessing the emotions of her heart. There are moments when silence is infinitely more eloquent than words. In Tresham’s mind, the present was one of those ecstatic intervals. He felt elevated beyond the usual limits of our nature. Though his vanity never permitted him to imagine he could possibly fail of success, he was enchanted by what he thought the dumb admission of the heiress, and by finding that all solution of difficulties and trouble of explanation should so easily be dispensed with. The pleasure arising from this conviction must have been evinced in his looks ; for Lady Grace said hurriedly—

“ No change, I repeat, has taken place in my feelings. I must ever pity the unfortunate

weakness which leads those we love into trouble so as to endanger not only their prosperity, but also their reputation. Nevertheless, Lord Sidney, I assure you that my cousin Clara has been always dear to me through all her misfortunes; and a similar interest in your prospects has led me to congratulate every one concerned upon the termination of all legal impediments to your speedy marriage with Clara Delaunay."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, Tresham could not have been more astounded, nor betrayed his confusion by a greater transformation of countenance. The surprise rendered him speechless for a time.

"Yes," continued Grace, with a pertinacity that was excruciating to her companion, "every event which has recently occurred seems to facilitate this much-desired object. Even my father's death has contributed to remove an obstacle in the handsome legacy he bequeathed

to Clara, whose means are now ample for all your wants ; and, moreover——”

“Stop, Lady Clementsford, stop, I beseech you,” interposed Tresham. “I can hardly imagine you are serious. You must be ignorant of all that has happened ; but you shall no longer be blind to the conduct of Mrs. Leicester, who has rendered my marrying her quite out of the question by her own act.”

“What do you mean ?” demanded Grace, changing colour. “No new misfortune, I trust, has happened.”

“Nothing *new*, that I know of,” replied Tresham, with malicious significance and false insinuation. “Indeed, of late I have lost sight entirely of Mrs. Leicester. Since her connection with Mr. Greville, I could take no further interest in her.”

Lady Clementsford felt excessively irritated at this last observation ; but for the sake of her

great object, she determined to mask her resentment.

"I am happy to say," pursued she, with resolute steadiness of purpose, "that *I* have heard a good account of Clara. She is well, I am told, and looking forward to the time when she may be united to you."

"As I before told you," persisted Lord Sidney, "such an union is now impracticable. When Mrs. Leicester accepted Mr. Greville's protection, she must have understood that any further connection with me could not for a moment be thought of."

"I can satisfactorily demonstrate in a few words," observed Lady Clementsford, "that Clara evinced the most commendable prudence in accepting Mr. Greville's offer of lodgings at the house wherein he lived. At that time, being almost destitute, she was unhappily located in a neighbourhood infested by ruffianly men and abandoned women. Mr. Greville

fortunately met her—not there, not there, where she had been driven by frightful poverty—but in the Burlington Arcade, whither she had repaired to seek work for bare subsistence. He rescued her from unspeakable misery, and placed her under the same roof with himself. During her sojourn there, she occupied quite different apartments from those belonging to him, and resided exclusively with the respectable ladies of the house. Mr. Greville scarcely ever saw her.”

A supercilious smile played on the lips of Tresham as he heard the above statement.

“We will not talk any longer about these affairs,” said he; “they will not bear scrutiny. In spite of all past occurrences, my love for you is unabated; and I hoped, from various circumstances, that your own feelings towards me had undergone no change, and that you intended to fulfil your engagement.”

Grace spake not. She was indignant; and

not trusting herself to reply immediately, she remained looking on the floor.

“The unfortunate entanglement I was involved in with Mrs. Leicester,” urged he, “never changed my affection for you. My engagement with you was still binding. My—”

“Lord Sidney,” interrupted Lady Clementsford, “you must not continue to speak in this manner. You should be aware that your words convey to me a gross insult.”

Tresham was confounded by this firmness. He saw clearly enough that his audacity was manifested only to be repelled by the decision of Grace. It was, therefore, necessary that he should try the effect of lenient words.

“It is very far from my wish to insult you, Lady Clementsford,” said he in a meek voice. “Every feeling of my heart would rebel against such an act. My adoration of you is as warm, as enthusiastic as ever. I have fallen into a thoughtless folly. Forgive me, I implore you.”

Tresham's language was now becoming dangerous. He was arousing recollections which Grace desired to stifle. She therefore quickly said—

“All this is foreign to the purpose of our present interview. Let me, once for all, be explicit. My sole aim is to arrange the preliminaries of your marriage with Clara. Former engagements—after what has passed—are out of the question. I never can consent to be your wife. Mrs. Leicester was my dearest friend, as well as cousin. You must clearly perceive how necessary it is that you should make her all the reparation in your power. I say, once more, I cannot marry you. Your honour is implicated with Mrs. Leicester. I pray you to consider the matter maturely out of respect for your own character.”

Tresham was abashed, but he did not relent.

“I never will be united to Mrs. Leicester,”

exclaimed he, emphatically; "the most powerful reasons are against it."

"But surely," persisted Grace, "when I can remove all suspicions, and prove, beyond a doubt, that you alone are the person Clara loves, and more, that she never loved any man but you——"

"Your arguments," interrupted Tresham, sneeringly, "are certainly romantic, if not jesuitical; but they cannot influence my determination."

"Am I, then, to understand," interrogated Grace, "that you decidedly and finally refuse the offer made to you? Clara will soon be independent of the world. All pecuniary difficulties——"

"Nothing on earth," exclaimed Tresham, interrupting his companion, "will induce me to marry Mrs. Leicester, were she as rich as Cræsus, or even as yourself. I am beyond the power of any temptation she could offer. The

engagement with you must be fulfilled. I claim your promise."

"All this," quietly remarked Grace, "is no less absurd than unfeeling. I absolutely refuse to ratify my hasty contract with yourself. That my affection for you is changed, you must attribute solely to your own conduct. There is, however, one part of our engagement which I will——"

Tresham impatiently stopped her, for he knew what was coming. She was about to mention his debts, which, when he and Grace were affianced, she had promised to liquidate. Any acceptance of this, he felt might be construed into a relinquishment of his claim on the whole of her great wealth

"Do you, then, really intend to break your word, solemnly pledged, to become my wife? Are you resolved to compel me to resort to a publicity most injurious to both parties?"

Lady Clementsford did not reply.

“Am I to believe,” persisted Tresham, “that the Countess of Clementsford is unmindful of her sacred promise?”

“Pray stop this useless repetition,” said Grace; “no threats of any kind—still less those of publicity, which would only injure yourself—can terrify me, or make me, by marrying you, break the heart of my dearest friend, and irretrievably tarnish the honour of a man I formerly esteemed. Let me once more ask, will you consent to a marriage with Clara?”

“Never!” replied Tresham.

“Then,” retorted Grace, “I never will speak to, or see you again, except as her husband. Until you become so, I must consider Lord Sidney Tresham as one entirely destitute of the honour and courage of a gentleman, for whom I can entertain no other feelings than those of profound contempt. Should you ever feel the shame which alone can restore you to the estimation of those who respect honest dealings, I

shall be glad to be the bearer of a contrite message to my cousin, in whom my interest will ever remain the same."

"That message," said Tresham, "you will never have an opportunity to convey. My determination will remain unchanged."

"I have said all I have to say," replied the Countess. "Our interview must terminate."

She bowed to him, and left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

VISIT TO MRS. RIBBLE—PERPLEXITY OF GRACE.

IN his recent interview with the Countess of Clementsford, Greville had made no allusion to Mrs. Gellscrust, an omission which did not accrue from any wish to conceal the fact of that good woman having come to London to comfort poor Clara—why, indeed, should it?—but from the confused feeling consequent on his emotion in the adored presence of Grace, added to the pre-occupation of his mind on leaving England to resume his military duties.

After her meeting with Tresham, Lady Clementsford felt it imperatively necessary to see Clara, that she might acquaint her with the result of that conference, and also announce the legacy left her by the late Earl—a bequest which would place the forsaken one at ease for the remainder of her life.

With this view, Grace drove to the house in M—— Street, Bloomsbury, as indicated by Greville, where, to her inexpressible vexation, she heard that Mrs. Leicester had gone away the previous morning. None of the family knew whither she went ; and all the information Grace could acquire was, that her cousin was accompanied in her departure by an elderly woman, who had sat up with her the previous night.

“Clara,” thought Lady Clementsford, “has eluded me a second time. How often the incidents of life run in parallels ! One occurrence frequently repeats another, like the reflec-

tion in a mirror. But who can be Clara's companion? Not Mrs. Ribble, surely! Yet I must not precipitately dismiss this idea, especially as I can form no other guess; and it is just within the range of possibility that it *might* be that eloquent landlady. I can readily imagine her anxiety to have Clara back with her. But then she believed Mrs. Sidney was dead—to say nothing of the improbability of her tracing Clara to her new abode. When I called last on Mrs. Ribble, she had not the most remote clue capable of leading to her missing lodger, dead or alive. Still I must not forego any chance, however unpromising.”

And stepping into her carriage, her Ladyship told the coachman to drive to the Row behind Regent Street. The man recollected the place and the house which his mistress desired to re-visit.

Grace's arrival at Mrs. Ribble's tenement was greeted by the landlady with humble, but en-

thusiastic delight, expressed in her choice Attic phraseology.

“ Oh, my Lady !” she exclaimed, “ how proud I am to see your Ladyship ! You bring news of poor dear, dead Mrs. Sidney. Well, to be sure, it’s all over now ! I hope she had a beautiful burying. For I’m of opinion to think that the best thing any Christian can long for arter they ’re gone from this walley of tears, is a ’andsome burying. Oh, how I wish I had been there ! I’ve got some lovely bombazine at three and ninepence a yard, and it should have been made up with pleasure had your Ladyship kindly permitted me to have gone and bin one of the ’art-broken attendants. I love a burying beyond every earthly thing, ’cause its so awful, and ’cause we are all in black, and our bonnets is trimmed with crape, which it is becoming to most complexions. It suits me wonderful. Your Ladyship, I see, is in deeper mourning than afore ; accordingly, Mrs. Sidney must have

took and gone out of the walley ; for, to be sure, all flesh *must* go out of it some time or the t'other. Poor dear Mrs. Sidney ! my 'art mourns for her, and I should have enjoyed being at her burying. I shall never forget the burying of my lamented husband. Ah ! he were a jewel of a man ! All the neighbours was there in illegant black ; and I gave 'em tea and crumpets arterwards, and something good for all our 'arts, which it come from 'The Mitre.' Oh, I shall remember the day as long as ever I live ! for everybody said the refreshments was quite 'andsome."

The Countess made no attempt to stop this flux of words, for she always enjoyed Mrs. Ribble's style of oratory—a pleasure in which she might now indulge, as the subject of it was living and well.

Mrs. Ribble's funeral notions are not peculiar to herself, but are found, nearly without exception, in all her class. A recent writer has

drawn an ascending scale of the enjoyment of uneducated people. He determines it to be thus: a christening, a wedding, a murder, an execution, a ghost, a funeral. This last is the apex of their pleasure: human delight can extend itself no further.

“Your commiseration is very kind, Mrs. Ribble,” said the Countess; “but it is exhausted in vain in the present instance. Mrs. Sidney, I am happy to say, is alive and well.”

“Is she really, then?” asked the landlady. “Only think! Well, now, this *is* news, ’specially as I warn’t at her burying. O, its unbeknown, my lady, hov I’ve a’most cried my very eyes out of my precious head about her! I’d have give the whole world to have her back again here. And where is she, poor dear? I hope she hasn’t took and forgot *me*.”

“Unfortunately,” replied the Countess, “I have lost sight of her. The object of my present visit to you was to ascertain whether you

knew anything of her movements. This hope, however, is already frustrated by your supposition that she is dead. As far, therefore, as that goes, I am better informed than you."

"You may depend, my Lady," responded Mrs. Ribble, "she'll be back to this house in a day or two, now that she's come to life: perhaps, this blessed night. For she know'd when she were comfortable. She had all her meals reg'lar to a minnit. If *I* waited for my own little refreshments, *she* never waited for her'n. And I give her my company, and told her merry tales, and all the scandal of the neighbourhood, to cheer her up when she'd got the hips. No, no; she'll never be 'appy without her Rebecca to wait upon her. *My* name's Rebecca, my Lady," continued the landlady in a tone of spasmodic affection. "And I've took and kep' her room for her, and refused three shilling a week, it's unbeknown how often, which it is three-pence more than I charged *her*; and I've

made her window gay and cheerful with nice flowers all in pots and growing, to put her in mind of the country ; and among the rest is a lovely double rhinoceros, which it is a choice plant."

"A what?" inquired the Countess.

"A double rhinoceros, my Lady," replied Mrs. Ribble. "I bought two on 'em—one for myself and the t'other for poor, dear Mrs. Sidney. Here is mine, my Lady," continued she, taking a flower-pot from the window-sill, and holding it out to the Countess.

"Why, this," observed Lady Clementsford, "is called a ranunculus, not a rhinoceros."

"O yes, my Lady," rejoined Mrs. Ribble with a glance expressive of exultation at her own better knowledge, mingled with pity for the general ignorance of the world, "I knows *some* people calls 'em so ; but they're wrong, as I often tells 'em. That flower, I assure your Ladyship, is a beautiful double rhinoceros."

The Countess was resolved not to laugh; but she had no little difficulty in preserving her resolution.

“I feel obliged to you, Mrs. Ribble,” said her ladyship, as soon as she could compose her countenance, “for your consideration in keeping the room for Mrs. Sidney, and decorating it with flowers. But it is necessary I should say—and I do so with reluctance on your account—that you are not likely to see that lady again in your house.”

On hearing this, Mrs. Ribble burst into uncontrollable sobs.

“You must not distress yourself so,” pursued the Countess. “How long has her room been empty?”

“Full twelve weeks, my Lady,” replied she. “But it isn’t *that* I minds. ’Tis the loss of poor, dear Mrs. Sidney as preys upon my ’art, and I sha’n’t be ’appy no more. *That’s* what I minds.”

“We are all subject to disappointment, more or less, in this world,” suggested the Countess, by way of assuaging Mrs. Ribble’s grief.

“Very true, my Lady,” said the woman, still sobbing. “And, moreover, I must pay back to your Ladyship four pound fifteen, out of the five guineas you put into my hands, for I’d no time to lay out more than ten shilling of it for Mrs. Sidney. I’m the most unfortunate woman in the world.”

“You must do me the favour, Mrs. Ribble,” said the Countess, with a smile, “to accept the trifling sum of which you speak ; and I shall pay you thirteen weeks’ rent, at three shillings a week, for Mrs. Sidney’s room, which you may let as soon as you please.”

The landlady brightened up and dried her tears as two sovereigns were dropped into her hand.

Lady Clementsford now arose ; and Mrs. Ribble having performed, without accident, one

of her desperately profound curtseys, the visit was at an end, and her Ladyship's carriage disappeared.

"Come," said Mrs. Ribble to herself, "this isn't a bad day's work. Nigh five pound as a gift, and three shilling a week for thirteen weeks, and a shilling over, for a room as has been let all the time to old mother Pipp's ever since Mrs. Sidney took and was murdered, as we all thought. Hows'ever, I'd rather Mrs. Sidney had stopped, 'cause I shou'd, every now and then, have had the handling of Lady Grace's money. But there! people can't be always in luck."

The Countess was greatly annoyed at the abortive conclusion of her inquiry. It was important, on every account, that she should find Clara. "What steps shall I take," thought she, "to discover her? Would it be prudent to address an advertisement to her in *The Times*, stating that if she will apply at some

specified place, she will hear of something to her advantage?"

This plan was debated in Grace's mind as she drove homewards, and, at length was given up for divers reasons. In Clara's present circumstances, publicity would alarm her. Were not her movements shrouded in secrecy? Why, then, should the poor fugitive be hunted by public appeals?

"No, no," thought Grace, "I must not do this. If I wait patiently, some information may arise. But who can be her female companion? Ha! A sudden conjecture strikes me. Perhaps it is her mother, Lady Delaunay, who has come out of her hermit-like seclusion to pity and console her erring child. I must wait the turn of events."

CHAPTER V.

REMOVAL OF CLARA AND MARTHA TO KENSINGTON.—BROOK GREEN IN 1847.—LETTERS BETWEEN CLARA AND HER FATHER.

AFTER breakfast, on an unusually bright, soft day, early in November, 1847, Clara, her infant, and Mrs. Gellscrust, left the house wherein Mr. Greville had resided. Nurse, having seen her luggage put on the roof of a cab, entered the vehicle in which her companion and child were already settled. The driver was now ordered to proceed to Kensington, and stop there at some respectable inn.

“ My object in going to a house where travellers are received,” said Martha to Clara, “ is to have a place where our luggage might be safely deposited, and our food provided, while we look about the neighbourhood and secure furnished lodgings preparatory to our finally suiting ourselves with a secluded cottage at a yearly rent.”

“ But, my dear Martha,” suggested Clara, “ you have overlooked one important difficulty. How is such a cottage to be furnished ? and where are we to obtain funds for rent and taxes ? ”

“ Do not harass yourself about that,” replied Martha. “ I have brought with me sufficient money for the purchase of a few articles of furniture, to which we may from time to time make additions, and also for rent and house-keeping during the first half-year. When that is exhausted, I have another store, now at interest, to draw on.”

“ You must do no such thing, my dear, good Martha,” said Clara, in a voice shaken by strong emotion. “ I will not consent that for my sake you should become what I already am — a beggar.”

“ No fear of that, my darling child,” replied Martha. “ If I *pay* rent here, I shall also *receive* rent by letting my house furnished at Dalesbrook. One must help to balance the other. We shall be very happy, depend on ’t.”

Clara was silent. She had so long suffered undeviating misery, that her mind had lost the power of healthy mental perception. She feared to resign herself to any pleasant hope, for she fancied some menacing disaster lurked in every scheme which, at first sight, promised comfort. To her imagination, a grinning fiend, mocking human happiness, was omnipresent — he was ambushed in the thronged resorts of men, and among the gardens and trees of seclusion. On the present occasion, how-

ever, Clara struggled against her despondency, and said—

“I thank you from the depth of my heart, dear Martha, for your loving-kindness in trying to make me once more comprehend the blessed idea of home. And is it, then, possible that we shall realize it?”

“I trust, my dear, it is *certain*,” replied Martha. “We must have a house and a small garden, and trees at hand, which, with waving boughs and the soft murmur of falling leaves, may whisper to us of innocence and peace. My books, too, shall come here for winter amusement, for I will not *let* those with my cottage at Dalesbrook. Cheer up, dearest.”

“Heaven bless you!” returned Clara.

Thus conversing, they arrived at Knightsbridge, and were soon skirting Hyde Park with its “patrician trees,” touched by autumn with various decaying tints of sober richness, and its “plebeian underwood,” every plant of which still

preserved a youthful green. The latter did not aspire like their congeners : their humility defended them.

Kensington was shortly reached by our wanderers, and the cabman drew up in front of a good-looking inn.

The ladies now alighted ; and their luggage being taken charge of by a waiter, they were conducted into a private room. The hostess promptly followed them, and arrangements were made for their sojourn during two or three days. A double-bedded chamber was secured, and dinner ordered. While this latter was in preparation, the two friends (Martha carrying the baby) strolled into the royal gardens, solacing themselves with a view of the groves radiating in vistas from a circular lake near the palace. Though the year was so far advanced, the fine old trees still retained a considerable portion of their leaves, and stood in grave resignation waiting till winter should lay

them bare. No wind was abroad : the autumnal quiet was profound ; the sun was sinking grandly ; and the scene altogether gave our wanderers a foretaste of the serenity they hoped to enjoy in this neighbourhood.

The baby having been lulled to sleep on one of the beds, and the hostess having promised to look to it from time to time, Clara and Martha sauntered westward, and ascertained that furnished lodgings were not scarce. Their walk extended as far as Brook Green, a spot which charmed them ; for though by modern *improvement* it had lost a portion of its former beauty and character of retirement, its old features were not totally obliterated. A good space of the time-hallowed "Green" remained ; and the lofty trees that must have stood there more than a hundred years, still threw their branches high up to meet the clouds. The border revealed glimpses of openings conducting the eye to quiet recesses ; and on the

west were seen some old-fashioned buildings of a rustic style of elevation.

"We must explore this charming vicinity more at leisure," said Clara. "My affections cling to it. Here, though in perfect retirement, I shall be within two or three miles of those whom I love—my father and Lady Grace."

"Yes," responded Martha, "this spot is as sweet as Dalesbrook. We may enjoy our solitude even close to the hum of the Great Babel."

Evening now descended like an overshadowing cloud, though it was not yet four o'clock. The two friends, therefore, retraced their steps to the inn, when the infant, now awake, was taken by its mother, and dinner was soon served; after which, Clara wrote the following letter to Sir George Delaunay:—

"The * * * Inn, Kensington,

"*November 5, 1847.*

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"When I returned from Spain, accom-

panied by Lord Sidney Tresham, you affectionately urged me to go home with you, and make your house my settled abode. I had reasons then which forbade that step; and to these are now added others, rendering such a plan still more unadvisable both on your account and my own.

“But though I am not worthy to reside under your roof, you may still befriend me; and I hope your former love for your daughter will induce you to do so.

“Your old housekeeper, Mrs. Gellscrust, has given up her cottage at Dalesbrook and come to London, expressly to comfort and be with me in my adversity. We wish to take a small cottage near Brook Green (if one is to be had), where we can live in the privacy nowhere so well found as in the suburbs of London. I must not, however, consent to be a drag on the means which Martha has laid up as a provision for her age. *You* would not, my dear

father, I am sure, permit me to be a burden on this good old friend.

“I therefore appeal to your fatherly love to grant me a small yearly allowance—my wishes are very humble—and thus enable me to defray, in part, the expenses of our retirement.

“Do this, I beseech you, for the love of Heaven.

“I remain,

“My dear father,

“Your ever affectionate and dutiful daughter,

“CLARA DELAUNAY.”

“P.S. Direct to me, under cover to Mrs. Gellscrust, at the above inn.

“To the REV. SIR G. DELAUNAY, BART.”

It is torturing to send such a letter as this, even to a father. The interim between its despatch and the arrival of an answer, is worse still. But when the reply comes to hand, who shall describe the agitation of one who despe-

rately tears open a missive on which so much depends ?

Judge, then, what feelings took possession of Clara's breast, when, on the succeeding day, she perused the following :

“The * * * Club, Pall Mall,

“November 6, 1847.

“MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

“I duly received your letter, and lose no time in replying.

“Your request that I should settle on you a yearly income is quite out of my power. You forget that I have to make payments every quarter for the separate maintenance of your mother, with whom, though she has not fallen into the snare that has ruined you, I cannot live. Her excessive irritability of temper and worrying sanctimony are incompatible with the repose of mind in which I desire to pass my remaining days.

“ On your return from Spain, I ardently wished to have you under the paternal roof. This shall still be your shelter from the storms of life, if you are now so minded. But I cannot, for a moment, entertain the idea of granting you, out of my slender means, an annuity for life. You know not what you ask. As an earnest, however, that I may, from time to time, help you with a trifle, I enclose herewith a cheque on my banker for twenty pounds. And may Heaven bless you !

“ I am,

“ My dear Clara,

“ Your loving father,

“ GEORGE DELAUNAY.”

“ P.S. I cannot congratulate you on your choice of a companion.

“ To MRS. CLARA DELAUNAY.”

It is possible that a more cordial answer than the above might have been sent by the baronet

to his daughter, had not Clara alluded to Mrs. Gellscrust, whom he disliked because she always took the side of her beloved and respected mistress. Sir George felt this as an outrage on his self-love which he cherished with more adoration than he could bestow on the feelings of any other human being. Accordingly, as Clara had chosen Mrs. Gellscrust for her companion and guide, the coolness he now manifested to his daughter might have arisen from resentment at the uncompromising rectitude of the housekeeper.

Clara read the letter to Martha, omitting the postscript ; and Martha, though she longed to give vent to the feelings that agitated her, was silent for many minutes. How could she utter to a daughter any reprehension of her father ? At last she said,—

“ Well, my dear, we must manage without Sir George, and we *can* do so. Were it dependant on my vote, the twenty pounds should be returned to him.”

“No, no,” replied Clara, “he is my father ; and it would not become me to affect a testy pride or bandy words with him. I will ‘gently take what ungently comes.’ True, I looked for more sympathy, and am consequently disappointed and mortified. But I will retain the money, which we may find very useful, and write him a short letter of thanks : he shall never know how much his answer has hurt me, nor what pain he has inflicted in outraging my heart by the reproaches he has cast on my dear, dear mother. Strange, that my father should have made *me* the recipient of harsh reflections on my mother !”

“Strange indeed,” echoed Martha. “Lady Delaunay is an honour to human nature. In the best sense of the words, she is a true, good Christian. What should I have been without her kindness ? And that which she has generously bestowed on me out of her small resources, I will share with *you*, the beloved object of my

affections. Come, let us go out and select our private lodgings. I will carry the dear baby."

Having equipped themselves for walking, the friends sallied forth and examined several lodgings, till they came near the eastern entrance to Brook Green, where they found a first-floor, which, as it suited them, they engaged by the week, the woman of the house undertaking to wait on them. On the following day they left the inn, and took possession of their quiet apartments, which stood back from the road.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VEILED LADY—THE VILLA NEAR BROOK
GREEN.

A FORTNIGHT had now passed since the friends left the inn at Kensington, and they had not yet found any house, bordering on Brook Green, which possessed the character they required. None were to be let except such as were either too large, too showy, too townified, or others of a mean and comfortless aspect. Still Clara and Martha would not give up their search in the vicinity of the Green, which attracted the liking of both.

In their perambulations, they more than once crossed an elderly lady who gazed at them fixedly, and never failed to turn when they had passed, and renew her scrutiny. At first, neither Clara nor Mrs. Gellscrust cared much at being objects of the stranger's marked curiosity ; but at length it became rather annoying, especially as the features of their prying observer were obscured by a black veil, not so thick as to hinder her own sight, though it partly concealed her face from others.

This seemingly impertinent observation was the more vexatious, as Clara and her friend, longing for seclusion, had come thus far into the suburbs of town ; and as they found they were invariably met in their morning strolls by the stranger, they changed the direction of their walks, which were now confined to the spots near Hammersmith church. Here they were free from the inquisition of the veiled lady.

After having abstained a few days from

traversing the Green, which they preferred to any other promenade, Clara and Martha ventured once again to visit it and ascertain whether it was still haunted by her who had previously dogged their steps. She was no longer seen; and the friends renewed their search for a residence.

In former saunterings, they had noticed a pretty "villa"—as suburban houses of that class are somewhat affectedly called—standing alone, with a garden in front, and a side passage evidently leading to one at the back. This was precisely the place they would have liked; apparently, it included all the adjuncts they had embodied in their *beau-ideal* of a retired dwelling. But it was inhabited, and consequently unattainable.

One day, on resuming their walks in localities skirting the Green, Clara and Mrs. Gellscrust found themselves opposite this coveted house, and, again surveying it, they saw a bill in the

parlour windows, stating that it was to be let with immediate possession.

"This is fortunate," said Clara to her companion ; " shall we not go in and look at it ?"

Martha assented, and her hand was on the gate-bell, when the house-door opened, disclosing the veiled lady, who was issuing forth.

" Come away," said Clara ; " I fear that woman ! My heart, I know not why, beats violently when I see her. Come, I will not remain another instant."

The two friends instantly retreated with a quick pace.

" Your alarm is positively unwise, my dear," said Martha, with a boldness which she had never before manifested in addressing Clara. "*I* do not like the stranger because she scans us so narrowly ; but as to *fearing* her, no such idea ever entered my brain. The days of witchcraft are over. The stories about an evil eye are unadulterated nonsense. The fact is, my dear

lady, that you must be out of health. Medical advice is necessary for you. Your mind, unless it were clouded by physical ailment, would not have conceived such vain apprehensions as now torment it."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Clara. "But, be it as it may, I am much disturbed at sight of that person."

"Then," rejoined Martha, "I will, to-morrow, go alone and look over the house."

"Do so," said Clara; "and should you see the lady, who, of course, will be unveiled in the house, you can tell me something about her."

Accordingly, on the following afternoon, Martha went to look at the house which had so strongly attracted both herself and Clara. The occupants were gone, and the furniture was removed.

On a thorough inspection, Mrs. Gellscrust found that the interior of the premises answered every expectation excited by the outside: the

back garden was secure from being overlooked, and the rooms were not without some slight pretension to elegance. A reference was given to the landlord, an upholsterer in Hammer-smith.

This was reported to Clara, who immediately went with Martha to the shop indicated, where they learned that the former tenant of the cottage being suddenly obliged to go abroad, had felt compelled to vacate the place, which was now quite ready to receive a new inhabitant.

“If you are willing to take the premises at once,” said the landlord, addressing Mrs. Gellscrust, “you may have possession immediately, and I shall not expect any payment of rent to commence till the ensuing Christmas quarter. You will thus live rent free above a month. You have seen that the house is in good order.”

“Will you permit myself and this lady to confer for a short time alone?” asked Martha.

“Certainly,” replied the landlord, leaving the room.

Our two friends were not long in making up their minds, especially as the yearly rent suited them, and when the landlord returned, Mrs. Gellscrust said—

“As we are but newly come from the country, we are not able to give any reference in town. We have lodged, however, a fortnight close by, and I dare say our landlady will give a good account of us. We are ready, moreover, to pay immediately, in advance, a quarter’s rent from Christmas to Lady-day.”

No objection was made, and the landlord, having given his receipt for the money handed to him by Mrs. Gellscrust, the ladies were told they might take possession whenever they pleased.

“That would be of no use without furniture,” observed Martha; “for though my house in

the country is abundantly stocked, I intend to let the furniture with the tenement."

"You are quite right, ma'am," said the landlord, delighted with the hope that he might supply articles necessary for the occupation of the house he had just let. With this view he expatiated on the excellence and cheapness of his goods.

"We will think of it," replied Mrs. Gellscrust, "and perhaps may deal with you. But you must bear in mind, that though we are not rich, we uniformly pay in ready money, and expect to have the advantage of it in the prices charged."

"Of course," rejoined the landlord, agreeably surprised at letting his house on the very edge of winter, and much pleased with his tenants, to whom he delivered the key of the "villa."

"Well," said Clara, as she and her friend walked back to their lodgings, "you have arranged admirably, dear Martha. My father's

twenty pounds will help us, though I fear your funds will be sadly taxed."

"Don't let that annoy you," responded Mrs. Gellscrust. "Remember that we shall have goods and chattels to show for it, to say nothing of more than a month's exemption from house-rent."

On the following day, Clara and Martha went again to the landlord's house, and selected furniture sufficient for the parlour and the largest bed-room, for which latter two beds were provided and a cot for the infant. Kitchen requisites and crockery were purchased at other shops in Hammersmith; and in a week more, a female servant having been engaged, the friends were domiciliated in their detached and quiet residence.

Mrs. Gellscrust now sent to Dalesbrook for her books.

Oh, with what transport did poor Clara, who of late had been condemned to vile rooms in

vile neighbourhoods, hail the possession of a house for herself and Martha—a house in a healthy and secluded spot, surrounded by gardens and silence! Martha was no less gratified.

“Now,” thought she, “I can carry out what I have contemplated in reference to Lady Grace. But my dear Clara must know nothing of the first movement.”

CHAPTER VII.

HOME—HOW IT MAY BE DISTINGUISHED—
MARTHA'S LETTER TO THE COUNTESS OF
CLEMENTSFORD—HER LADYSHIP'S VISIT TO
THE COTTAGE AT BROOK GREEN.

Few of the minor incidents of life are more pleasing and interesting than the furnishing of a new residence. All then about us is novel and full of promise. The mere selection of carpets, chairs, tables, &c., is invested with a kind of grave importance, ludicrous enough in itself, though it helps in building up the idea of

home, which, however, should possess *special* features to distinguish it from other domiciles. One's abiding-place—to be emphatically one's own—must not exactly resemble that of any other person. But as this distinguishing character cannot be realized in the *useful* articles of our apartments, as chairs, tables, and such like, which are common to all families, we must seek, in garniture of an *ideal* nature, to attain the peculiarity desired.

For this purpose, nothing is so effectual, where paintings cannot be afforded, as engravings hanging in frames on the walls. These prove the taste of the owner, and confer individuality on the room: they are our best *lares*, or household gods. A print or two from the sunny and serene landscapes of Claude—others, reproducing, though only in black and white, the austere, antique grandeur and remote visions of Nicolas Poussin (such as his Polyphemus, the gigantic

Cyclops, piping on a rock in Sicily to Galatea or his Shepherds in Arcadia)—a specimen of the woody solitudes of Gaspar—a mezzotinto representing one of the mysteries of Rembrandt, where darkness and light struggle for conquest—a cheerful garden-conversazione of Watteau, and others, may be procured in engravings, at a small cost; and Clara resolved, if ever she should possess a little spare money as a gift from her father, to dignify her room, and feed and elevate her thoughts, by such intellectual accessories of home.

It is, indeed, surprising how much may be done in this respect for a trifling outlay. The late Mr. Rogers, the poet-banker, declared that “True taste is an excellent economist.”

Clara agreed with this axiom; but at present the sitting-room of herself and Martha must be contented with the bare paper-hanging.

O, how apt are we all to muse upon, and promise ourselves, luxuries which we feel to be unattainable ! Thus, Clara anticipated the possibility, some day or other, of having a piano-forte in this hushed retreat. For an amateur, she was, or had been, poor soul ! a good performer on that invaluable instrument. Formerly, she was capable of executing and understanding the scholastic preludes and fugues of Sebastian Bach, the deep-thoughted and inspired conceptions of Beethoven, of whom it might be said, in the words of Milton, that he

“Untwisted all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony ;”

the grand and touching reveries of Mendelssohn, the eloquent raptures and pathos of Dussek, or the mighty passion and exuberance of Mozart.

The garden behind the house was a delight

to Clara. Here she could tranquilly pace up and down, carrying her baby, well wrapped-up, who crowed, as if exulting in the open and sweet air. The former tenant had left his modicum of ground in good condition ; and, though the year was in its decay, several late autumnal plants still flourished, and chrysanthemums promised to cheer December.

For a time, these welcome influences monopolised the thoughts and heart of Clara. Not so with Martha.

One morning, when November was drawing to a close, the Countess of Clementsford received the following letter. Martha had not heard of the Earl's death.

“ Chester Cottage, Brook Green, Hammersmith,

“ November 27th, 1847.

“ MADAM,

“ Your Ladyship will not recollect the humble individual who signs this letter.

“ During great part of my life, I was a servant in the family of your Ladyship’s relations, Sir George and Lady Delaunay. To my charge, was committed their two children, — Clara (now Mrs. Leicester), and Mary, the present Duchess of Ellingfield. It is a part of human infirmity to make preferences and elect favourites among individuals surrounding us, often without reason. Thus, my heart was given solely to Clara, whom I still love with unabated fondness.

“ When the unhappy dispute arose between Sir George and my Lady, I left the family, having, in my long servitude, saved enough to maintain me in my age. To this, was added an annuity generously settled on me by my good mistress, who, moreover, gave me a cottage in the village of Dalesbrook, where I have lived several years, passing my solitude chiefly in reading the standard books with which my Lady (never tired of bestowing comforts) pro-

vided me. It is now a very long time since I saw Lady Delaunay.

“ I take the liberty of addressing your Ladyship, on account of my dearly-beloved Mrs. Leicester, who is now with me here. I left my cottage at Dalesbrook and came to London at her earnest desire, for she was in a state of fearful destitution. We have managed to take a small, but pretty, house, close to Brook-Green, where I believe she would taste a slight portion of happiness, were she not tortured by remorse, at having acted, in some way, treacherously to your Ladyship.

“ Sir George lately sent his daughter a small sum of money, with a vague intimation that he might probably, at some indefinite time, afford her another remittance.

“ As Mrs. Leicester is entirely ignorant of my writing to your Ladyship, perhaps—if you are so kind as to answer me—you will direct to *Mrs. Gellscrust, to be left at the Post*

Office, Hammersmith, where I will call from day to day, for a week to come. A word from your Ladyship would greatly relieve the heart of poor Mrs. Leicester.

“It is fit, however, your Ladyship should know that, since her divorce, Mrs. Leicester has again become a mother, and that the child is with us.

“I am, Madam,

“With deep respect,

“Your Ladyship’s very humble servant,

“MARTHA GELLSCRUST.

“To the LADY GRACE DALZELL, Clementsford House.”

To say that the effect of this letter was consolatory to Grace, would not represent her feelings, which were those of rapture. Even the mention of the child did not disturb her self-congratulation; for she had been prepared for it. On the contrary, she vowed to herself that,

should the necessity arrive, she would protect that child through life, though its birth was evidence of the treachery of her own affianced husband. She rejoiced to know that Clara, whose dreadful sufferings in part atoned for her offence, had, at last, found a haven from the storms of the world—from malice, detraction, and want. The lost one was found; and should be welcomed with kisses and joy.

Therefore, Grace wrote to the old house-keeper, saying, she would forthwith call at the cottage in Brook Green, and desiring Martha to apprise Clara of her intended visit; enjoining her, however, to say that, so far from harbouring any resentment at whatever Clara, with too much self-severity, might imagine deserved it, she was only too happy on learning she was safe, and had so invaluable a companion and friend. Her Ladyship instructed Mrs. Gellscrust to say to Mrs. Leicester that her cousin would meet her with smiles and joyful con-

gratulations ; and that she had some pleasant news wherewith to greet her ; not, however, with reference to Lord Sidney Tresham.

On this latter point Martha was enjoined to be emphatic.

It is one of the ordinations of Providence that forbearance and forgiveness, when least expected, should affect us more than anger and revenge. Against the latter, our self-love and proneness to the *lex-talionis* defend us ; but we give way under the pressure of an affectionate embrace by those whom, however unconsciously, we know we have injured.

So was it with Clara when Grace came a third time to see her, with, to use her own words, smiles and joyful congratulations.

The first outburst of gladness on again being together, having passed, Grace begged permission to look over the house.

At this request, Clara trembled ; for how

was she to conceal the infant? But as denial would be worse than allowance, Clara requested Mrs. Gellscrust to conduct her Ladyship into the different rooms.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNTESS AND MARTHA—THE EARL'S REQUEST—ITS EFFECT ON CLARA—A HARD TASK—GRACE, AND CLARA'S INFANT—A WELCOME GIFT.

“ You have a quiet and pleasant abode here,” observed the Countess to Mrs. Gellscrust, as they looked over the house “ This parlour-floor,” continued her Ladyship, “ has, I see, three commodious apartments, commanding open spaces, sky, and trees. The silence, too, is pleasant. In one of these rooms you might place your books. You must miss your little library, Mrs. Gellscrust.”

“I have not done so yet, my Lady,” replied Martha. “The agitation of my mind on hearing alarming news of Mrs. Leicester, and the recent occupation of my thoughts by house-hunting—a fatiguing amusement—have made me unmindful of all else. But now that my dear lady and I are settled—for I will never leave her while life lasts—I begin to wish for my old friends, the books, and have sent to an acquaintance at Dalesbrook, begging him to see them safely packed and forwarded to this house.”

“You have done well,” responded the Countess. “I, too, am familiar with the wise and abiding solace of books, and know not what I should have done without them in my late severe trials. I have lost my mother and my father, Mrs. Gellscrust. These are great afflictions, to say nothing of misfortunes which will not bear to be dwelt on. Among other disquietudes, I have suffered much about Clara; but this is now happily mitigated by your devotion to her,

which is, indeed, a consolation and a precious boon."

"Your Ladyship is very good to say so," replied Martha. "I heard that Lord Clementsford was very ill," continued she; "but the melancholy intelligence of his death has not, till this moment, when I hear it from your lips, reached me. Both Mrs. Leicester and I are out of the world, my Lady."

"Then," said the Countess, "Clara does not know it?"

"She does not," responded Martha.

"My father's death," observed the Countess, "will place Clara in pecuniary ease for the remainder of her life."

The good old woman started, for she was assailed by mingled emotions; joy on hearing of Clara's good fortune, and fear that the change in her circumstances might separate her dear one and herself.

"This bequest," resumed her Ladyship, "is

the pleasant news to which I alluded in my letter to you, Mrs. Gellscrust. And when we return to the parlour, I shall make it known to my cousin. Meanwhile, let us go upstairs and see the rooms above."

They ascended, and Martha conducted the Countess into Clara's sleeping-room.

"We have two beds here, my Lady," observed Mrs. Gellscrust, "because we felt it prudent to furnish our rooms by degrees. Therefore the two other rooms on this floor are, at present, empty. But there is a more essential reason than that for the present arrangement. I could not leave my dear lady to sustain, without assistance, the nightly charge of the infant."

"Your friendly care is invaluable," said Grace, with a faltering voice. "But the child! the child! where is it?"

"Out with the maid for an airing," replied Martha. "As the morning is unusually fine for

the time of year, I sent the infant forth, warmly clothed, without consulting its mother."

"I wish," said the Countess, "to see it, with a longing more intense than words can express; and am resolved not to leave you and dear Clara till I have pressed her baby to my heart. Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A girl, my Lady," responded Martha.

"Poor child!" exclaimed the Countess. "With her future equivocal position in society, she will need, not only the affection of her mother, but the delicate ministrations of anxious and watchful friends to save her from mortification, if not insult. To assist in repelling these, she shall always be under my eye, and receive my entire countenance. And," added her Ladyship, with her usual respect for the feelings of others, "you, my good Mrs. Gellscrust, will aid me."

Martha felt the full force of the compliment, and said—

“I thank you, my Lady, for your flattering opinion. But I am old, and cannot expect to see this poor disowned infant — disowned, I mean, by her father—after she has reached a time of life when the peculiar care of which your Ladyship speaks will be peremptorily required. Therefore I rejoice greatly that she should have met with so affectionate, watchful, and powerful a friend.”

Having spoken a few words in reply, the Countess added,—

“Come, let us return to the parlour. Clara will miss us, and wonder at our delay.”

So saying, her Ladyship and Martha descended to the sitting-room.

“Dearest,” said Grace to Clara, with a sigh, when they were alone (Mrs. Gellscrust having, with a delicacy of mind above her station, left the apartment after conducting her Ladyship to it), “dearest, you will be shocked to hear that my beloved father is no more.”

“Good God!” exclaimed Clara, “I am, indeed, shocked! Though, from what Martha heard a little time ago, I ought to have been prepared for this distressing intelligence. I should also have observed that your mourning is deeper than when last I saw you. No one, except you, dear Grace, can feel with greater agony the Earl’s death than myself. Peace be with his soul! He was always kind to me—kinder than I can express. I respected and loved him.”

“And *he* loved *you*, Clara,” returned the Countess, with emphasis. “When I answered your worthy companion’s letter, I mentioned that some good news were in store for you.”

“She told me so,” said Clara, with a sigh, indicating how hopeless she was that good, by any possibility, could accrue to *her*.

“My father,” pursued Grace, “has bequeathed to you a sum sufficient not only to keep you in comfort, but to maintain you for the rest of your

life in the position to which your birth entitles you."

On hearing this unexpected announcement, Clara lifted up her hands and eyes in wonder. She was bewildered and dumb. Could she have listened aright? Was it in the nature of human events that she, who had been remorselessly hunted by desperate and accumulated misfortunes, and thrown aside as a kind of weed among her fellow-creatures—who had been acquainted with misery in its most repellent forms—who had known what it is to herd with forlorn and hunger-bitten wanderers, and herself to want food and change of raiment—that such a one should on a sudden be independent of the world, and have, not only the decorums, but the luxuries of life at her own command, without being beholden to any one——was this possible? The thought was too much to bear: it must be a dream—a hallucination—not a sober, demonstrable fact. Words were denied

her : she was overwhelmed by a torrent of new sensations. Still, in the tumult of her soul, thoughts arose of Tresham, and a hope indistinctly flashed across her mind that an union with him might now be accomplished.

For awhile, Grace did not interpose a syllable. Though when she contemplated, with earnest scrutiny, Clara's profound abstraction, and suspected to what it might lead, she thought it prudent to call her back to reality.

"Clara," said she, "do not, for heaven's sake, give way to this ecstasy. It will weaken, and unfit you to hear what else I have to tell."

"Something doleful, no doubt," replied Clara, now finding her utterance; so true is it that misery is less astounding—less difficult at first to bear—than sudden felicity. "Tell me all," continued she, "and snatch me from overpowering dreams of joy. In this world one must not, you know, be *too* happy."

Grace sighed deeply.

“No, indeed,” exclaimed she, “our all-wise, all-good Creator limits our enjoyments here to prepare us for bliss hereafter.”

“True!” ejaculated Clara.

“Now listen,” resumed Grace. “I have lately had an interview with Lord Sidney Tresham, who, low and worthless as he is, has ruined the happiness of you and me. My sole purpose in permitting him to enter my house again, was that I might urge upon him, as a gentleman, to make you his wife. I told him emphatically and unequivocally that I would never consent to marry him. At first he had the audacity to reproach me with my former promise, nay, my contract; from which, however, I felt absolved by his subsequent conduct to you. He even talked of an appeal to law; but I met this bravado with scorn and defiance, and again pressed upon him his sacred duty to you, representing that you now possessed ample means to sustain a position in life worthy both of

you and himself. This seemed to have no effect on him, and he peremptorily refused to do you justice. Therefore, dear Clara, I implore you to dismiss all thought of this dishonoured profligate, even as I have done. Having given him to understand, at this final meeting, that I would never again speak to, or even see him, I abruptly quitted the room, and rang for my servant to see him out."

Clara received this statement with enforced resignation, aided by the pride of self-love, which neither misfortune nor a consciousness that our sufferings have resulted from our own wilful acts, can wholly destroy.

"I fully recognise, dear Grace," said she, "your wisdom when you advise me never more to think of Tresham; and I promise to follow it as far as is possible. But this is a resolution which *you* can more easily carry into effect than *I*, who, culpably, am the mother of his child. How can I bestow upon her a mother's care?"

how can I watch her slumbers, or lift her to my breast, and not think sometimes of her father ? ”

“ It is a hard task,” responded Grace ; “ but you must pray for strength of mind to accomplish it. I have never seen your infant. Let it, I beseech you, be brought to me, that I may fold it to my heart.”

Clara rang the bell.

“ Where is the child, Susan ? ” asked her mistress, as the girl entered.

“ Just come in, ma’am, with me, who have been a little way out to give her air.”

“ Who sent you ? ”

“ Mrs. Gellscrust, ma’am ? ”

“ Very well,” said Clara. “ Let the child be brought here.”

The painful embarrassment under which Clara had suffered respecting the infant and Grace, had now been conquered by her own

involuntary admission in a moment of great mental excitement.

Susan had scarcely left the parlour, when Mrs. Gellscrust entered with the babe.

Lady Clementsford rose from her chair, darted towards Martha, took the child from her arms, and pressed it to her bosom with all the rapture of a mother who had lost and regained it.

“This infant,” said she, looking at Clara with tear-charged eyes, “shall be mine no less than yours. Let it be so, will you? I, alas! shall never have a child of my own—I shall die unmarried. Here, here, is the only child of my heart. God will love it, and save it from the ills of life; and I humbly, but fervently, beseech Him to make me an instrument in aiding her mother to promote the welfare of this poor innocent, deserted by her father.”

Clara was too much overcome to speak; and

Martha, feeling the melancholy influence of the scene, was silent.

Meanwhile Grace redoubled her caresses on the unconscious infant in her arms.

"Come," said Lady Clementsford, after a speechless interval, "let us be cheerful and talk of household matters. I think, Clara, you might be perfectly comfortable for a year or two in this pretty retirement, which, with all its seclusion, has the advantage of being close to London, so that you may come to me when I am in town, and I may visit you. Make up your mind, I warn you, to see me pretty often."

Clara and Martha smiled at the notion of the Countess putting her visits on the footing of inflictions.

"You and Mrs. Gellscrust," pursued her ladyship, addressing Clara, "had better go to-morrow to your upholsterer and order furniture for *all* your rooms. Your good friend will

need some shelves for her books on their arrival from Dalesbrook ; and the empty apartments should all assume a comfortable appearance of home, which can hardly be while even one room is left vacant."

"Certainly not," interposed Clara, with a faint smile.

"On which account," pursued Lady Clementsford, "I myself have a horror of an empty room. See what effects Mrs. Radcliffe gets out of them in her 'Udolpho,' and other mysterious romances."

"Yes, my lady," said Martha, "I recollect those ; and am ready now," continued she, with a laugh, "to tremble at the terror."

"Therefore," resumed the Countess, "let us have no empty rooms : I always suspect that ghosts love emptiness, and are sure to take possession of any place having an attraction so irresistible to them."

Clara tried to laugh, but the endeavour was abortive.

“There is a precious adjunct of home,” observed Grace, “which I know Clara will require—one of the most welcome enchanters of our dwelling, without which I should feel, as Shakespeare says, ‘like one forbid.’ I mean a piano-forte. Next to literature, I cannot describe what I owe to fine music; and let us not forget that music fed the lofty imagination of Milton in his troubles. Though I am not so good a performer as my cousin here (dear Clara), I have beguiled many a heavy hour with the effusions of great musical authors in all their moods of grandeur, passion, serene pastoral luxury, and lyrical interpretations of the struggles in our hearts.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Clara; “they, though in a less degree than illustrious poets, render us familiar with the mysteries of human emotion, whether arising from pleasure or pain.”

“And pleasure predominates,” rejoined the

Countess. "For which reason I must be permitted to present you with a piano-forte, which I will procure to-morrow from Broadwood's."

"Many, many thanks, dear Grace," said Clara. "This, indeed, will be a precious gift. Oh, how I have longed for a piano — the orchestra of home!"

The Countess now prepared to depart, having again fondly caressed the child, and bade a tender "good-bye" to Clara.

"I shall come again in a day or two at farthest," said she. "Now, be sure that you and Mrs. Gellscrust go again immediately to the upholsterer and order furniture, according to your own taste, for *all* your rooms. You can well afford it; your legacy, after some necessary preliminaries of law, will speedily be invested in the public funds in your own name. Meanwhile, send the upholsterer to me for payment of his bill. Once more, adieu, for a

couple of days, dear Clara and good Mrs. Gellscrust."

So saying, Grace entered her carriage and drove homewards.

CHAPTER IX.

CLARA'S AGITATION — THE LANDLORD'S OBSE-
QUIOUSNESS — WELCOME GIFTS — A HAPPY
DAY AT THE COTTAGE.

“WELL,” said Mrs. Gellscrust to Clara, after Lady Clementsford had left them, “the news we have heard to-day is marvellous, resembling rather some of the sudden changes of fortune in ‘The Arabian Nights,’ than a sober truth in our matter-of-fact island.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Clara ; “but this unlooked-for access of competence is too much for

my spirits, weakened, as they have been, by long suffering. Oh, Martha, you cannot imagine what degradation I have formerly been doomed to endure! I could have borne up—I hope bravely—against continued adversity, but this strange turn in my favour overcomes both body and mind. It scares me. Bear with my weakness, Martha.”

And she burst into tears.

Martha was silent: she thought it best to let the agitation exhaust itself, rather than urge its unreasonableness, as many well-meaning people are apt to do on similar occasions, without reflecting that any attempt to subdue by commonplace arguments such perturbation as that which now shook Clara, would be as futile as endeavouring to stem a swift and violent current in a boat without oars or rudder.

“A night’s rest,” thought Martha, “by the blessing of heaven, will restore her calm.”

According to the good woman’s anticipation,

Clara arose next morning in a state of composure, and, after breakfast, she proposed that herself and Mrs. Gellscrust should go to the landlord, and order more furniture, agreeably to the wish expressed by Grace.

On seeing him, the friends were amazed at his excessive obsequiousness ; for, though he had always behaved with civility, his manner at present was marked by profound deference. A bowing inclination of the head, every now and then, followed the termination of such remarks as he ventured to make touching the manner in which he proposed to carry his tenant's wishes into effect.

“ To what,” thought Clara, “ can this prodigious respect be attributed ? He cannot, surely, have heard of my newly-born wealth. Impossible ! Yet his manner is marked as strongly as if he had.”

Clara's conjectures were entirely baffled.

The fact is, that Mr. Wilsborough (the land-

lord), on passing through the Green on the preceding evening, saw, drawn up before his new tenant's door, the Countess of Clementsford's equipage. The armorial bearings on the carriage, and the deep mourning in which the coachman and footman were clad, attracted his curiosity, and he asked the latter, with an apology for his inquisitiveness, whose carriage it was. As the appearance and manner of Mr. Wilsborough—a flourishing individual—gave evidence of his respectability, the footman told him it was the Countess of Clementsford's, who had called there on a visit to one of her near relations.

This was quite enough for the landlord, who immediately felt the necessity of transferring to the relation the homage he would have been delighted to bestow on her ladyship had an opportunity offered.

What worshippers of rank and wealth are we English! In the present instance, the prostra-

tion of soul by Mr. Wilsborough, might be vindicated as being manifested for a lady ; though, there can be no doubt, that had the visitor been an Earl instead of a Countess, the adoration would not have been less ardent. Very humiliating is our tendency in this direction. Had any plain Mister—however illustrious as a legislator, a philosopher, an historian, or a poet—been at the door of Chester Cottage, the landlord-upholsterer would, in all probability, have felt no overwhelming reverence at the name. Truly, we are a nation of flunkeys.

Our present nobility may boast of men of the highest intellect and worth—men who would confer honour on any class—without whom, society in general would lose much that is of the utmost importance to retain. Patricians have been called by a celebrated authority, whose political leanings nevertheless are democratical, “the salt of the earth”—an Oriental eulogy, which many of our men of rank deserve. Give

them, therefore, the utmost respect due to them. They are public benefactors. But *worship* from one human being to another, is foolish, if not worse. Worship is due only to the Most High.

Mr. Wilsborough begged he might be permitted to go with Mrs. Gellscrust and her lady to the cottage, and himself take measure for the book-shelves, carpets, &c., required. He would not delegate this to any of his men.

It was arranged that one of the three apartments on the ground-floor, looking to the back-garden, should be fitted up as a music-room and small library. Here, the occupants might retire to read, or enjoy the performance of inspired musical composers—a prospect, in the contemplation of which, Clara and her humble friend revelled. The sphere of refined intellect was miraculously restored to Clara, who had now a house of her own wherein to welcome it. This transporting mental luxury was enhanced by the recollection that, at one period, it seemed to be

for ever banished. The Graces and Muses fly in horror from Poverty.

Lady Clementsford — knowing that a promised good is ten times more valuable when promptly rendered — lost not a day in choosing one of Broadwood's upright piano-fortes for her cousin; and, on the present evening, only twenty-four hours after her visit, the instrument was delivered at Chester Cottage. To make the gift more immediately available, it was speedily followed by a selection from the works of classical composers, so that Clara could at once try if her hand had "lost its cunning." At first, the keys seemed strange under her touch, and she experienced no little difficulty in reading the page she had placed on the desk. But a little patient application restored pliability to her fingers, and familiarised her once more to the characters which represented the author's conceptions. This innocent and elevating endeavour charmed her, and soothed her mind:

she was happy. Who that had never undergone the torture of sufferings such as hers had been, could estimate the vast amount of her present happiness?

On the same evening, as if there had been a conspiracy to increase the intellectual treasures of Chester Cottage, Mrs. Gellscrust's books arrived. These, having been selected by Lady Delaunay, whose acquirements were of no ordinary description, it may be imagined that the collection, though not large, included works of high estimation, but of a past era. Among them were Addison's "Spectator," and the writings of other English essayists; the poems of Milton and Pope; Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World," and his delightful "Vicar of Wakefield;" Sterne's unbigoted, but eccentric Sermons; the "Arabian Nights;" and all Doctor Johnson's Works, which no one can read without becoming wiser and more virtuous. His inestimable Dictionary—a wonderful production for

one man, or for twenty men—was not forgotten. There were other books of less mark, but all were entertaining and good.

What a day of enjoyment for poor Clara ! The busy occupation of her mind from morning till night was favourable to her spirits. Martha rejoiced to see it. When they both retired to rest, the feelings of Clara were not agitated, as they had been the night before, under the excitement of sudden good fortune. She was now reconciled to her felicity and gave way to repose.

CHAPTER X.

EVENINGS AT CHESTER COTTAGE.—A SURPRISE.

THE Countess of Clementsford was a frequent visitor at Chester Cottage. To her, it was a great relief to be free, for a time, from the demands of ceremony and the receipt of unlimited adulation. Under the comparatively humble roof at Brook Green she could enjoy familiar and loving talk, perfect ease, and exemption from formality. Sometimes she would escape from her mansion for a whole day, dining at an early hour with Clara and Mrs.

Gellscrust, whose absence from the table Grace would never permit. With a true woman's heart, she was delighted to fondle and play with the infant, which she handled with as much skill (*selon les regles*) as if she had been a nurse-maid all her life.

Nature, providentially, has given to all women an untaught power of holding and managing young children. A man would be in danger of letting them fall from his arms: he is puzzled by the mystery of the long clothes, and knows not where the baby ends: his immense awkwardness distresses the child, which manifests its impatience by unmistakable squalls. In the hands of any woman, on the contrary, little miss or master is content, and crows her or his approbation: the feminine arm becomes in an instant, as if by magic, a perfect cradle. The child, accordingly, knows it is in good quarters, and exults.

The evenings at Chester Cottage were mostly

passed in the music-room. Here Clara both played and sang. Most affecting was it to hear her deliver those two songs of graceful pathos in Mozart's DON GIOVANNI, "Vedrai Carino," and "Batti, batti." She and Grace occasionally varied the pleasure by vocal duets, and duets for the piano-forte.

Under these happy influences, life seemed to Clara like enchantment.

Lady Clementsford's liberality and kindness were not yet exhausted. Our two recluses could take the air in no other way than by walking; and as Grace wished they should enjoy little excursions for a few miles without fatigue, she placed at Clara's disposal a plain carriage capable of being used, according to the weather, either as a close or an open vehicle. She also sent a pair of her own horses, which, with the carriage, might be kept at the nearest livery stables, where a driver could be hired when wanted.

This thoughtful accommodation was bestowed early in December—a strange time, it may be said, to contemplate drives for air. But our climate is a very capricious one. We have sometimes numbing and murky days in summer, and soft west-winds and sunshine in winter.

“———— Hoary headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;
And on old Hyems’ chill and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set.” *

These exquisite lines were written two hundred and fifty years ago, and the attributes of the seasons are as often contradicted now as then.

One mild, clear, sunny day, at the commencement of December, Clara and her friend Martha thought they should like a short drive before noon in the open carriage, taking the

child with them. They planned to go eastward as far as Hyde Park and back. But a surprise awaited them, and their purpose was frustrated.

On passing through Brook Green they saw once more the veiled lady. Clara's eyes and those of Martha were fixed, as if by some unaccountable fascination, on the stranger, who, as they came opposite her, lifted her veil. Clara, with the keenness of young eyes, distinctly saw the countenance, and trembled violently.

"I think it is my mother!" gasped she.

"Good God!" exclaimed Martha. "Stop the carriage, for Heaven's sake! I will get out and go to her."

This was done. The lady remained motionless as a statue, and Martha walked back to the spot, leaving Clara, whose heart palpitated with fearful expectation. She longed to meet her mother, whom she had not seen for several years; and yet, should the unknown prove to be Lady Delaunay, she dreaded the interview,

for either her mother must have heard of her divorce, or she (Clara) must make it known to account for her living with Martha away from her husband. She now bitterly repented having come to Brook Green, though she would not abandon her hope that the stranger might not be her mother.

As she looked towards Martha and the lady, she saw they were in earnest discourse, with every sign of mutual recognition. The terrible trial, then, must be met. She must face her mother—her pure and blameless mother !

“There is no end in this world,” thought she, “to the torturing consequences of sin.”

Martha now returned to the carriage.

“Yes,” said she to Clara, “it is indeed your mother, my ever-honoured mistress ! She partly suspected who we were when meeting us on previous occasions ; and yet the surmise seemed improbable, as she supposed me to be at Dalesbrook. That you and I should be together

and *here*, appeared to be so unaccountable that her ladyship tried to dismiss the idea from her mind ; but still it clung to her. She was not certain even about *me*, for age has changed me. Her motherly instinct, however, persisted in prompting the belief that my young companion could be no other than yourself."

"She is gone, I see," said Clara, in a faltering voice. "Will she come again?"

"Yes," replied Martha ; "she will come to the cottage in the afternoon."

"Then," exclaimed Clara, "may God aid me in the meeting ! Let us, at once, return home. I am faint, and sick at heart."

They reached the house in a few minutes, and the carriage was dismissed.

On entering the parlour, Clara, whose face was white with fear, said—

"I saw you, Martha, in earnest conversation with my mother. What passed ? Tell me all, I implore you. Does she know what

has occurred? Is she acquainted with my guilt?"

"Calm yourself, my dear," replied Martha. "Lady Delaunay is, of course, aware of what has happened. I say '*of course*,' because all public law-proceedings are reported in the newspapers and discussed universally. It must, therefore, be expected that news of such deep import to my mistress would be sure to reach her ears even in her seclusion."

"And yet," interposed Clara, "*you*, Martha, did not hear of these law-proceedings, and knew nothing of my divorce till I myself told you."

"The cases are not similar," responded Martha. "I was living in a remote village, and only every now and then saw the public journals, when my neighbours could conveniently send or bring them. Her Ladyship, on the contrary, would, in all probability, have them from day to day."

"True; but what said she just now?" gasped

Clara. "Is she coming here this afternoon to rack me with upbraidings? If so, Martha, I cannot see her. Nay, I *will not* see her—much as I long to embrace my dear mother."

"Your fear is vain," responded Martha. "Of her own accord she declared that the subject of your divorce should never be alluded to by her in your presence."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Clara, heaving a deep sigh, as if unloading her bosom of a perilous dread. "But," pursued she, "does she know of the child?"

"She saw it in the carriage," answered Martha; "and meekly said, 'That, I suppose, is the infant of my daughter and Lord Sidney Tresham.'"

"You could make only *one* reply," observed Clara, fixing a haggard look at her companion.

"I made *none*," rejoined Martha.

"It could not have been avowed more distinctly," said Clara.

“No,” replied the good old friend; “and her Ladyship understood me. Do not, however, torture yourself with needless apprehensions. My mistress will abstain, you may be assured, from uttering one word to give you pain.”

“Do not think me perverse or fastidious, Martha,” rejoined Clara. “But even this promise of forbearance is, of itself, a mortification. For is it not mortifying to be thankful for the silence of another who is acquainted with our misdeeds? Blessed are they who do not need such indulgence! How happy I was last night! But morning comes and blights my budding joy!”

And she wept tears of shame and agony.

Martha said what she could to console her lady, urging her to meet the necessity with firmness.

Dinner passed; if, indeed, that might be called a meal at which little or nothing was

eaten. And then, Clara, in a pitiable tremor, took her post at the window, listening for the sound of the gate-bell, and watching for the dreaded advent of her mother.

She did not long remain thus, before a ring was heard. The handle must have been pulled by weak or hesitating fingers, for the bell struck only once. In Clara's ears it was like a knell. To her disturbed and excited imagination, something fatal seemed lurking in that one stealthy sound. Could her parent come with such ominous timidity? Was it, indeed, she? Did she long once more to behold her daughter? If so, why did she not ring a peal of haste and joy?

Clara's eyes were fixed on the gate, which was soon opened, and Lady Delaunay, veiled as before, appeared.

"She is come!" ejaculated Clara to Mrs. Gellscrust, "she is come! Do not leave us by ourselves, Martha; or, at all events, not just at

first. Go to the door yourself, and bring her in."

Martha did as she was bidden, and Clara and her parent, after a protracted separation, were once again together.

"My mother ! my mother !" exclaimed Clara, staggering towards her.

"My child ! my dear child !" were the only words of Lady Delaunay, as she embraced her daughter. Tears, born of gladness and grief, were shed by both during that long and loving caress.

"Sit, mother," said Clara, "and tell Mrs. Gellscrust and me how long you have been in this neighbourhood."

"Several years," replied Lady Delaunay. "And here, or not far away, I mean, God willing, to die."

"Is your ladyship's home near to us ?" inquired Martha.

"I have no home at present," replied Lady

Delaunay ; “ that is to say, no place which deserves so endearing a name. I am in temporary lodgings.”

“ Then,” pursued Mrs. Gellscrust, “ your Ladyship must have left your former residence.”

“ I was constrained to do so,” rejoined Lady Delaunay. “ I shall surprise you both, when I say that this house—this very house—was my home. I have passed many happy, holy hours here, where now we sit. But I no longer behold around me the objects on which my eyes loved to dwell.”

Clara and Martha exchanged looks of surprise.

“ I should never have departed from this abode,” continued Lady Delaunay, “ had not my venerated host been compelled, by sudden business of sacred importance, to leave England, and return to his native country, Spain. You, Clara, I understand, have been in Spain.”

A crimson flush came over Clara's pale face as she faltered "Yes."

Lady Delaunay noted her daughter's embarrassment, and a painful silence ensued.

Mrs. Gellscrust, who, good soul, perceived that the present was a critical point of the meeting, meditated how best she could relieve it by turning the thoughts of mother and daughter into another channel. So, like many impulsive persons who rush upon conclusions, she did the very worst thing possible at such a juncture. Leaving the room, she quickly returned to it with the baby in her arms, and held it out to Lady Delaunay, who could not choose but take it. She shuddered as she did so; and, having kissed its forehead coldly, gave it back to Martha, without speaking a single syllable.

"Take the child away," said Clara, deeply mortified by the reception its grandmother had

given it. "You were wrong, Martha, to bring it here."

Mrs. Gellscrust and the child quickly disappeared; and the former could not avoid contrasting with its present greeting the manner in which Grace had received and fondled it. "*She* had more reason than my own lady to dislike the poor, innocent child," thought Martha. "Yet she hugged it as if it had been her own."

These were the first words, either uttered or unuttered, that Martha had ever conceived against her mistress, who had uniformly been kind to *her*. But nothing irritates a true woman's heart so much, as indifference to an infant. *The* sex—to whom, happily and fitly, is accorded the pre-eminence expressed by the definite article—for certainly, in most respects, women surpass us males—are, Heaven be praised! in a general conspiracy to love and protect babies. Let us be thankful.

As soon as Clara had, in a manner, got over the slight which had been offered to her child, she said—

“Mother, you have spoken of the happiness you enjoyed in this house. Will you reside here again? We have abundant room to spare; and you shall have the same chamber to sleep in that you had before, let it be which it may. I feel sure you will be glad to hear that my uncle-in-law, the late Earl of Clementsford, has bequeathed property to me which will make me independent for life. If you will consent to dwell with me and your old, attached servant, Martha, I shall look for no other recompense than the heart-felt gratification of your company. What do you say?”

For a few minutes, Lady Delaunay did not answer, but seemed absorbed by deep cogitation.

At length she spoke, saying—

“I will not, my dear, mention more at present than that I thank your love for the offer you have just made. During the next two days, however, serious affairs demand my time. After these shall be debated, I will call again ; and when you have listened to a narrative of my life since I separated myself from your father, and become acquainted with my present opinions, you will be able to judge whether or not you ought to repeat your proposal.”

Then, looking at her watch, her Ladyship added, “I must now depart. My time is up. Shall I call in a few days?”

“Do so, by all means, dear mother,” replied Clara. “Won’t you come to dinner?”

“I will be with you next time early, and remain all day,” was the reply ; “for I shall have much to communicate. Till then, Clara, good-bye.”

Lady Delaunay now took her departure some-

what ceremoniously, without asking to see Mrs. Gellscrust, or making the slightest allusion to the child.

“What can she mean about her present ‘opinions?’” thought Clara. “Oh, how I wish the next few days were over!”

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARTY AT SAFIE.

THE story must now, for awhile, leave Clara and her mother, and revert to some scenes in the North, of prior occurrence.

Notwithstanding her pretended depreciation of Greville, the Duchess was glad enough to comply with the Duke's wish, and invite him to Safie Castle. Knowing that his presence would be acceptable to one of her guests, she had succeeded in obtaining a promise from the Salvatierras to come to the North; and, for

purposes of her own, she determined to make this visit the excuse for every gaiety and splendour at her command in the unexciting regions of her country residence.

A mortification was, however, in store for her, in Lady Clementsford's refusal to be of her party. In declining the invitation, Grace assigned, as a reason, her mourning. But she had much more powerful motives. She, however, offered no opposition to her new relatives going there.

The castle and demesnes of Safie were indeed princely, and afforded the greatest astonishment to the fair foreigners. The whole scene was new to them ; and the magnificence of an English nobleman's establishment so surpassed even their dreams, that it was with difficulty they could stifle the expression of their wonder every moment.

Everything was well managed at Safie.

The taste which Viscountess Smart used oc-

casionally to question in town, could not be impeached here ; for all was simple and grand. Indeed, the Viscountess, who was now on a visit at Safie, was most vehement in her admiration of the new furniture, and, above all, of the Spanish gallery, which was lately filled with works of the most celebrated artists, collected in Spain by the Duke.

Bob Blazer was also here. Indeed, it was a fact worthy of observation, that he was generally found in the vicinity of Lady Smart.

But then Bob was a general favourite. He talked for ever ; he knew all the gossip as soon as, and sometimes before, it was out in town. His universal good nature and laugh alone made him, in general, welcome. The Duchess found him useful also ; but did not employ him much in the presence of her female friend, as such had once led to a slight misunderstanding in London.

Bob was satirical and rather mischievous.

He knew the Duchess's passion for "a set," and was not ignorant of her *taste* for the fine arts and literature. One of his malicious *coup de pattes* was often levelled slyly at this weakness of her Grace. He was fond of perplexing her as to foreign authors—a superficial acquaintance with whom she thought it necessary to possess. Thus, Bob was in the habit of quoting passages from the works of Lamartine, and then, turning to the Duchess, would say—"As Victor Hugo beautifully remarks." Sometimes he would cite one or two of the sparkling, but caustic, "Maxims" of Rochefoucault, and attribute them to Fenelon! And he has been known to assign to Massillon the authorship of Boileau's famous satire, "the Lutrin!" The Duchess always acquiesced in these ascriptions, not in the least suspecting that Bob was audaciously quizzing her. Bob chuckled over his success; and the Duchess's spiteful little friend was equally delighted with the fun.

One day at dinner, Blazer had been particularly teasing; and as it led to some important results, it must be mentioned.—

The news from London was being discussed; and Bob was never behind in the “*canards*” of the metropolis. He had received letters from London; and he assured the ladies that Lady Clementsford was quite the rage—the universal topic of conversation. In fact, if she chose, she could form the best “set.” (Bob had heard nothing of this.) Every one admired her.

The Duchess imagined it required more than mere beauty or fortune to form “a set,” and dear Grace knew nothing of the world.

Bob continued. “Her marriage,” said he, “is beginning to be talked of, two suitors having been mentioned as her probable selection, namely, Captain Sl——, and Sidney Tresham. But I believe neither will suit her. You don’t know Captain Sl——, do you,

Duchess ?” interrogated he, with a provoking glance.

“Very slightly,” replied her Grace, appearing to be much engaged in looking for some object which had fallen ; and at this moment Greville remarked that her face was covered by the wonderful blush he had seen once before on Woolwich Common.

“They say,” pursued Bob, “that Sidney Tresham has bolted.”

“Really, Captain Blazer, you are very scandalous,” retorted her Grace.

Bob laughed one of his remarkable laughs which never left the hearers quite certain whether it was at them or merely to disguise the bantering expression of his own face.

The Duchess now rose ; and the party left the dining-room.

CHAPTER XII.

HOSPITALITY AT SAFIE CASTLE—CONSCIA
AND GREVILLE.

IT was the custom at Safie Castle for the guests to be quite independent, and not tied down by those rigid and provoking forms which make men appear more like automata than rational human beings. Indeed, it is matter of surprise why certain people, who imagine themselves superior to the rest of mankind, invite some visitors to their houses ; so coldly and superciliously do they treat them when they

arrive ; the lady, at whiles, curtseying as though an intruder or burglar had entered her sanctuary, instead of a bidden guest.

But at Safie, things were better managed.

The Duchess had, at any rate, gained something in her foreign intercourse. She had learnt that such awful stiffness was equally unnecessary and uncomfortable ; and consequently her visitors generally left her mansion well pleased with their sojourn.

After dinner, the ladies were not doomed to sit in formal circles, whilst some prosy gentleman, with his back to the fire, bored them to death with political surmises ; or some wretched girl was dragged to the piano, there to tremble, and often exhibit herself to great disadvantage.

At Safie Castle, there was a perfect and most delightful disregard of appearances. The drawing-room had all the air of a place that was inhabited by rational human beings. Books were open here and there—a guitar lay on the

sofa ; and it was, ever and anon, taken up by some fair hand, and touched for the pleasure it afforded herself and others, rather than for the sake of vain exhibition.

In fine, the people moved as they wished, and felt it no breach of etiquette to do so.

At the further corner of the drawing-room, was a door that conducted to a Grand Hall, which was brilliantly lighted with gas.

It was here that Conschia and Greville delighted to wander in the evening.

In reference to the painters, the gallery was called THE SPANISH GALLERY. Its walls were hung with none but original works of Spanish masters.

The Duke had lately completed this magnificent collection at an enormous expense.

The gallery was admirably lighted both by day and night. Conschia never seemed tired of contemplating the *chefs-d'œuvre* before her.

She and Greville had gone there almost di-

rectly after dinner. Their absence was unheeded by the rest of the party. But few words had been exchanged between them. Each appeared absorbed with the objects by which they were surrounded.

They had reached almost the extreme length of one side of the gallery, when Conschia sat down on an ottoman which had been placed in this spot especially for the contemplation of a picture by Murillo, greatly esteemed by the Duke, and for which he had paid a very high price.

“Do you know, Mr. Greville,” said Conschia, “that in looking at that picture, I always disregard its artistic merits ; so engaging to me is the small piece of background. That brilliant light on the distant mountain reminds me of my own—my dear Ronda.”

“True,” replied Greville, “Now that you attract my attention to it, I perceive a resemblance. But I confess I had previously seen

only the force and spirit of the kneeling figure. The background is, indeed, like Ronda. It reminds me of happy days. The thoughts of those who have lived amongst such sunny scenes invariably fly back to them in absence. For my part, it is my only idea of home."

Conscia laughs. But it was a true movement of sincere self-congratulation.

"You are inclined to be complimentary, Mr. Greville," said she, hoping to make him more explicit.

"No, Conscia, not complimentary, but truthful," replied Greville. "I am inclined to call to your recollection those happy days when you treated me with gentle kindness—when we used to gaze together on those beautiful mountains—and when you were less reserved than you are at present in these cold climes. Once I dared to think—pray forgive me—that a dream I had pictured might be realized. It was only once. But now—since I have met you here—I have

perceived such a change, that I begin to imagine my presumption was too great in clinging to the hope that some day, Conschia, I might call you mine."

She looked at him. She took his hand which he had advanced. Her eyes were full of tears. She tried to speak; but words came not to her relief. The pupils of those soft, violet eyes were quite distended: drops of tears clouded, for a moment, their dove-like serenity. Then, like bright sapphires glistening through a diamond circle, they chased the glistening tears down her cheek. She leant forward; the light curls of her beautiful hair fell on his shoulder. Her eyes were still fixed on his with an expression of gratitude, fully proving that the tears were those of joy; and she whispered—

"Oh, Henry! Do you, then, indeed, love *me*?"

There was a deep emphasis on the word "me."

A pause ensued : the eyes of both were set on each other ; the smiling lips approached ; and, in the first fervent kiss of pure and unmistakeable reality that she had ever received from him she had so long loved, Conschia banished from her mind every feeling of doubt. Her heart was filled with that ecstatic joy which we are permitted to experience only once in our lives.

They were alone, and in silence. O, what a moment ! The lovers indulged in the truest sensation of love, a mutual and unclouded confidence.

Greville was now repaid for many years of suffering and natural melancholy.—And Conschia experienced the reward of her patient and enduring fidelity.

A whole life of enjoyment was comprised in these few moments of sympathy and unfettered union of soul.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCANDAL OVERHEARD—THE LOVERS—A MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE — FASHIONABLE DETRACTION.

IT may be that half an hour had thus passed, when a gentle laugh, almost immediately behind Conszia and Greville, attracted their attention. They simultaneously looked round ; but no one was to be seen.

However, totally undesired on their part, they became listeners to a private conversation. The speakers were out of sight.

It has been said that Conschia sat down on a sofa near to a corner of the gallery, before the celebrated Murillo. At that corner was a passage, conducting to the Duchess's boudoir; and a curtain was hanging across the door-way. From behind this curtain, a female voice, laughing and speaking at intervals, (soon recognised as that of Lady Smart),—observed—

“ You were too severe. You pressed her too hard. — I can tell you she will not forget it.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed the other speaker. “ Wasn't it capital, — that hoax about Victor Hugo, and the rest ? ”

There was no difficulty in discovering Captain Blazer's laugh.

“ But,” continued the Viscountess, “ is it really true that Lady Clementsford is going to be married to Tresham ? ”

“ Oh dear no—not a word of it. He has been out of England some months.—Besides,

you, of course, know of her romantic attachment to some poor curate."

"Indeed! No, I never heard it mentioned," replied Lady Smart.

"Oh yes," rejoined Bob Blazer. "Quite a mystery,—of long standing,—et cetera. But I wished to tickle her Grace's ears—about 'the set'—and Tresham."

"Oh, 'the set' was charming," returned the Viscountess. "Elly quite winced; and you administered the *coup de grace* when you so ingenuously asked if she was acquainted with Captain Sl——. Didn't you observe how red she turned? I understood all about that.—But why bring in Tresham?"

The reply was almost lost as the speakers receded from the position they had taken up. Still, fragmentary scraps of discourse were gathered; such as—

"It is said, with what justice I know not, that Tresham's —But—the Duke—duel—Duchess."

The sense and words, however, became at last quite indistinct ;—and soon even the muttering died away.

The preceding colloquy distressed Greville much. He had become the unwilling hearer of what he knew to be an impudent fabrication,—viz., the attachment of Lady Clementsford to any but the one whose name had been so strangely brought on the *tapis*, merely for the purpose of annoying the Duchess. — Also he heard what he greatly feared was *not* a fabrication. Without any wish to think ill of her Grace, he had now an undefined suspicion of something unpleasant ; and he felt ashamed and shocked that his beloved Consacia should have heard so much scandal.

To divert her thoughts from that to which both had just been listening, he abruptly asked his companion if she remembered the afternoon at Ronda, when he had made a confidence to her.

“ Well do I remember that evening, *querido*, and the sunset behind the mountains from our terrace at Ronda, which Murillo himself must have seen ere he painted this background. Then, for the first time, I believed in your love, although you were confessing to me your first affection for another. And if you recollect, as I do, all the details of that conversation, you must be aware that your story was never completed. Who, then, was that angel you described who sacrificed her love to principle ?”

In the deep state of love which then possessed Consia, it appeared quite natural that Greville's thoughts should revert to the evening when he had almost confessed in words his passion for her ; and she therefore associated his question in no way as a consequence induced by the overheard gossip of Captain Blazer.

“ That superior person,” replied Greville, “ was Lady Clementsford. I have seen her since then, dearest ; she has talked to me of you. The man

she really loved, but resigned because she considered it her duty to do so, was Lord Sidney Tresham. Believe me, I knew not, or, at least, never considered the importance of her wealth, when I so heedlessly acted as I told you ; and when I saw you first at Ronda, and was so struck with your appearance that your image haunted me, it almost grieved me to learn you were the rich Marcheza di Salvatierra. All now is changed. I afterwards discovered that the report of your riches was greatly exaggerated. Then I began to indulge in the dream that is almost now realized. Upon my return to England, Lady Clementsford solicited an interview, when I learnt that I had gained an inestimable friend in her ; moreover, that her affections were totally fixed on another, which she was endeavouring to suppress. In fact, I saw in her the most noble, virtuous, and self-denying of women ; and I then discovered that my heart returned to Spain, to Conschia, and love—and felt at ease

and peace. It was by these sensations that I learnt that I loved you, and you alone. My feelings for Lady Clementsford were those of respect and admiration."

"Then, Henry," said Conscia, "you really were struck with me at first sight."

"I was truly," replied Greville.

"And is my sister Grace aware of your present attachment to me?" interrogated Conscia.

"Yes," answered Greville. "She has spoken to me much about you—of your constancy and devotion; and it was she that advised me strongly to accept the Duchess's invitation, although I felt not much inclined to do so. But when she told me she thought you required a guardian and watcher that loved you in the fashionable set you were going to mix with, all hesitation ceased, and I resolved to be at your side."

"Dear Grace!" ejaculated Conscia. "And does she take so much interest in me? She is, indeed, a good and noble woman."

"We must write to her and ask for her consent," said Greville, "must we not?"

"My Henry, yes, *querido*," replied Conszia. "I will do so to-morrow; for to tell you truth, I shall be glad to get away from this house, happy as I have been in it. I like not that Lady Smart, who appears so attached to the Duchess when with her, and takes every opportunity of ridiculing her behind her back. Oh, what a friend! Tell me, Henry, is it the custom in this country for wives to visit without their husbands, and to be left alone like Lady Smart? I hope you will not treat your Conszia thus."

He looked at her. Those full blue eyes were again moist. He regarded her with silent admiration, and was too happy to answer at once.

"It is, I grieve to say," returned he, "too much the fashion amongst a certain class and certain 'sets' in England, to behave thus.

But all husbands do not neglect their wives, nor all wives forget their husbands. Not those, be assured, who have learnt to love in Andalusia."

This irresistible compliment called forth a grateful return on the part of the lovely Conszia, and she gave a fervent embrace to her affianced husband.

Conszia and Greville now returned to the drawing-room. Their absence had scarcely been noticed. The Duchess and Lady Smart were conversing in the most friendly manner; the Duke was asleep in an arm-chair, with a newspaper on his knee; and Captain Blazer was turning over, in pretended amazement, the album containing the as yet unpublished sketches of her Grace in Spain, some of which, he told the Duchess, surpassed, in his opinion, the finest drawings of Correggio! And she believed him.

Next day, Conszia wrote to Lady Clements-

ford, to whom she confided her happiness, and requested a formal permission, or consent, to her marriage with Greville.

The answer to this letter was kind. Not only her unqualified consent to the union was given ; but the congratulations were blended with sincere praises of Greville—the most precious adulation to a lover.

Lady Clementsford wrote also to the Duchess, informing her of Conschia's approaching prospects. She stated that it would not be possible for her to come to Scotland just then ; but she hoped that the Duchess might arrange everything to her satisfaction, and consult with Conschia's sister as to her wishes on the occasion. She assured the Duchess, moreover, that her presence alone at the ceremony should be all that was wanting to make the wedding worthy of Lord Clementsford's daughter.

The issue of these consultations was, that Conschia and Greville should be married in Scot-

land; and the Duchess busied herself in active preparations. She was delighted to have the management of the affair, and wished it to be thought that the fair Spaniard was her especial protégée.

Time flew on. Conschia had visited Lady Clementsford in London, and returned to Safie Castle.

As we shall see but little more of the Duchess, we must not omit to state, that this "marriage in high life" excelled in display and publicity all the preceding ones. It eclipsed them all, and the *éclat* was to her heart's content.

Some there were who whispered that all was not quite in good taste. Lady Smart wrote to Bob Blazer an account of it, and decidedly proclaimed that the whole affair was ridiculous, considering the position of all parties. She added that Elly was getting fearfully fat to indulge in the *fondèing* which she thought necessary, when parting with her gipsy-found

cousin. In fact, the Viscountess ridiculed her dear friend to the utmost.

But the parties most concerned scarcely observed the outward preparation. They lived but for each other, and were intensely happy.

It was generally admitted that Conselia would be the belle of next season.

But Conselia gave the fashionable world no opportunity of proving its prophecy. Neither she nor Greville cared much for London now. They bought a small place in Kent, where they constantly reside.

Dates and time must not be too accurately noted now. Her Grace, as seen in the season, rather verifies the spiteful little Viscountess's charge of *embonpoint*. She herself, *en passant*, has rather fallen into the opposite extreme—her beauty being at all times rather of the scraggy order.

The "dear friends" are seldom together now; and both the Viscountess and Bob Blazer vow

that the last night they saw the Duchess at the play in a royal box she was over-rouged. Her daughters were pronounced to be too much grown for their mother to appear in such juvenile costume; and they told all their acquaintance that Elly had hired the box at an immense cost, and that it had not been lent by Royalty to her.

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY DELAUNAY'S NARRATIVE.

THE scene must now shift back to Hammer-smith.

It may be remembered that Lady Delaunay had promised her daughter to remain with her from morning till evening on the third day after their interview, the mean time being dedicated, she said, to grave and important affairs. As the appointed hour had now arrived, Clara was full of apprehensions, which, as they took no distinct form, were more oppressive on that very

account. A vague dismay is the worst shape which fear can assume.

Clara and Mrs. Gellscrust sat together in expectation. As the time, however, gradually drew nearer and nearer, Clara said—

“Now, my dear Martha, when my mother is here, let me impress on you my earnest wish that you do not bring baby into this room, nor allude, in the slightest degree, to the child. I will take an opportunity, now and then, of going to the nursery.”

“I scarcely need this caution,” answered Martha, in a voice which indicated plainly how much annoyance Lady Delaunay had inflicted by her want of tenderness to the unoffending infant. “I should not have brought the child again after her reception the other day by her grandmother.”

This short dialogue had hardly ended, before the gate-bell announced a visitor ; but this time it sounded a kind of peal. Clara and her friend

looked out, and (the gate being opened) saw Lady Delaunay enter with a stately step, as though she were on some important errand.

And so, indeed, she was, though Clara could not suspect it.

“I am here, you see, according to my promise,” said her Ladyship, “and hope to pass a day with you of uninterrupted intercourse. And how, my dear, do you like your new residence? I have already told you it is a great favourite with me.”

“Both I and Martha like it exceedingly, replied Clara; “and it is the more pleasant to us because my beloved and inestimable cousin Grace is fond of coming here, and passing whole evenings with me in affectionate conversation, and in the enjoyment of music. Grace is an angel.”

Lady Delaunay recoiled at these last words of her daughter.

“You should not permit yourself, Clara, to use such superlative expressions as those,” said

her Ladyship. "Angels are not of earth, but of heaven."

"True," assented Clara. "But when our enthusiasm is roused by rare earthly excellence, we naturally indemnify ourselves, by hyperbole, for the inadequacy of language to extol unusual virtue."

"In this, Clara, you and other worldlings are wrong," observed Lady Delaunay. "Lady Grace is very well, considering her errors."

"Errors!" echoed Clara. "I know not your meaning, mother."

"Listen, then," rejoined Lady Delaunay.—
"You will no longer be at a loss for my meaning after having heard what I must communicate."

Clara stared in astonishment. "What," thought she, "can possibly be uttered against so kind-hearted and virtuous a person as Grace?"

An interval of silence ensued; after which Lady Delaunay, concentrating her energy, said—

“I have changed my religion, Clara, and am now a Roman Catholic. You shall hear by-and-by how I was moved to this. You must understand that it is one of the ordinations of our faith that we should regard those who dissent from us as heretics. In devout obedience to this imperative command, I speak of the *errors* of Lady Grace—her religious errors.”

Clara was struck with amazement by this news. She made no remark. But at this stage of the interview she could not refrain from questioning in her own mind, the charity of that religion which could lead to imputations against the blameless life of any one.

After a pause, during which Lady Delaunay hoped her daughter would have time to recover from her evident surprise, the former said—

“You now know if my narrative will be pleasant to you, or otherwise. Shall I proceed?”

“Go on, mother,” answered Clara. “I can-

not deny that what you affirm startles me. I was not prepared for such a disclosure. But heaven forbid I should close my mother's lips!"

"Your words, my dear child, are those of a true daughter," rejoined Lady Delaunay. "I have much to explain—much that may not be palatable to you; for I am not ignorant of the difficulty and delicacy of arraigning a father in presence of his child. But you yourself have been a wife, and are by no means unacquainted with the treachery of men."

Clara sighed as she admitted the truth of her mother's remark and remembered her own sufferings.

"Like you," resumed Lady Delaunay, "I, according to the old familiar saying, have been 'paired, not matched.' I was a faithful wife and loving mother. My husband, however, did not understand me; and, though a clergyman, led a not very clerical life. My murmurs were not only ineffectual in producing reformation on

the part of your father, but seemed to increase the evil I deplored. At length finding he was incorrigible, I insisted on a separation, to which he, with insulting readiness, agreed."

"Not *insulting*, surely, mother, to consent to that on which you *insisted*," quickly interposed Clara.

Lady Delaunay shrank from this unexpected and logical interruption; and, with a frown, said—

"If you are not prepared to listen to me with the humility of a daughter, but, on the contrary, ruffle me by tart and sarcastic comments, I will cease, and take my leave of your house—a house which, only a short time back, was my happy and religious home."

Alas! it was to this house and its observances, whether right or wrong, that the change in Lady Delaunay's character might be attributed. Formerly, she was meek, sympathetic, trusting, and affectionate. Now she had be-

come austere and intolerant. But every allowance should be made for her on account of the woes she had endured ; and the element of love was not entirely stifled in her.

Clara was much discomposed by her mother's rebuke. For awhile, she was silent. At last she said—

“ Pardon my indiscretion, mother, and go on, I beseech you. I promise to be a dumb listener.”

“ When I left your father,” resumed her Ladyship, “ I went to a part of Devonshire many miles distant from the rectory. There I remained nearly two years ; and then the solitude and stagnation of existence—alone in a remote village—grew intolerably oppressive to me, and I determined to reside near London, where I could see more of human life in its many phases, and visit some old and esteemed friends in the west end of town. To be near them, and yet out of the everlasting turmoil

of the streets, I sought a residence in the suburbs of that district of the metropolis, and came here. It seems that you participate in my love of Brook Green. In this neighbourhood I have lived many years, never leaving it except once in the autumn, when I went into the country, and passed a day or two, a few years ago, with my esteemed old domestic—your present companion—Mrs. Gellscrust, at her cottage at Dalesbrook.

“But see how short a time will suffice to change the faces of old people. I did not know Martha when first I saw her on the Green.

“Wherever I was, or by whatever friends my loneliness might be solaced, I painfully felt the strangeness of my position.—I, a married woman of rigidly correct conduct, and unblemished reputation, living apart from her husband! True, it was by my own desire that I became thus solitary; for I could no longer tolerate the conduct of your father.”

Lady Delaunay now ceased to speak during many minutes. She seemed to be debating some question which had suddenly arisen in her own mind. At last she said, though in a hurried manner, as if she were acquitting herself of an ungracious duty,—

“ I fear, my dear Clara, you resemble, not *me*, but *your father*.”

This sneer appeared to be gratuitously cruel ; but it had a special object, though unsuspected by Clara.

Lady Delaunay was excessively touchy in matters affecting herself ; and yet could deal in taunts respecting others. But Clara’s present circumstances had roused within her the long-suppressed spirit of resistance to unfeeling conduct. It is said, that “ Wine works wonders.” Be this as it may, more wonders still are worked by money, under whose inspiration our valour knows no bounds, especially when we imagine we are wronged.

Clara took fire at what she naturally conceived to be an uncalled-for reproach, and she determined to repel it.

“Mother,” exclaimed she, with flashing eyes, “it is now *my* turn to make an objection. I am a woman and a mother, no less than yourself; and I cannot, without protesting against it, suffer any one—not even you—to make harsh insinuations respecting my conduct, which has already been dreadfully visited. What is your object in coupling my offences with those which you impute to my father? Are they not different in degree? I have undergone my punishment; and, so far, am freed from future penalty. You have accidentally seen me. With the sacred instinct of a parent, you have thrown yourself in my path, and come to my house by your own wish, and, God knows, by mine also. Therefore, let me supplicate you to abstain from increasing my woe by launching bitter innuendos against me, or, much as I should be pained by

the separation, consult your own peace and mine by leaving me, as you threatened just now."

Happy would it have been for Clara had her mother taken this advice, and disappeared. Poor Clara ! Having long been hunted by all kind of ills, she had at last become possessed of competence, two devoted female friends, and a secluded house invested with every comfort. Repose seemed to be at her command. And all these blessings were endangered by the misguided zeal of one who, obeying what she conscientiously believed to be praiseworthy motives, was sowing the seed of doubt and gloom. One might apply to Clara, with a slight alteration, what the witch in " Macbeth " says of the sailor whose wife had offended her :—

" Though *her soul* cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost."

Lady Delaunay kept her seat, but made no response.

“My torments,” resumed Clara, “have been unutterably severe. Pity, at last, has been taken on my agonies, and I hoped I had secured exemption from them. Grace, who had abundant cause for resentment against me, has only redoubled her kindness ; and—as I verily believe, at her angelic suggestion—her late father, the Earl of Clementsford, by an unexpected bequest, has made me independent of the world. *She* never once levelled at me a single word of reproach, either expressed or implied. And, pardon me, my dear mother, I cannot bear it, even from you.”

Lady Delaunay received her daughter’s reproof with astonishing patience, merely observing,—“So the old Earl is dead ! Grace is, therefore, now the Countess, is she not ?”

“Yes,” replied Clara ; not a little piqued at her mother’s impassive reception of the fact of Lord Clementsford’s death, and the intelligence of her own unexpected good fortune.

Lady Delaunay, however, in a little time, continued her narrative in marvellously perfect composure, as if no interruption had occurred. She, nevertheless, resolved not again to subject her daughter's complacency to so severe a test as she had just ventured on, because she plainly saw it might be destructive of her views as a propagandist.

“During my residence here,” pursued Lady Delaunay, “I had the curiosity to visit the two convents in this suburb. Hammersmith, you know,” continued she, with a smile which seemed like a silent sarcasm against Protestants, “has been called ‘a colony of Papists.’ In these convents I saw what I never before beheld—perfect devotion, and voluntary abnegation of the world and its false and seductive joys. To frequent these places of hallowed seclusion soon grew to be a passion with me ; and my constant presence there attracted the attention of one of the priests, a Spaniard, who had been long in England, and

was familiar with our language. We became acquainted: he asked me to his house—this house—and introduced me to his sister, who adorned it by her gracious piety. I accepted his invitation, and, in the course of time, felt inclined to his consoling faith. Like good Doctor Johnson, who, however, was too timid to obey the suggestions of his own heart, and take refuge where he imagined it could only be found, I ‘longed to repose on the bosom of an infallible church.’ Meditating, day and night, on my sorrows, and on the behaviour to me of my husband—a minister of what is called a ‘reformed church,’—I felt tempted to embrace the one pure, unerring, communion, which is not split up, as in your denomination, into an endless variety of sects, each reviling and hating the other, but is a perfect unity, where opinion never wavers, and where every believer acquiesces in the judgment of the Pontiff who rules over all. With us, there are no textual controversies.

Our Supreme Governor is infallible. His decision settles everything.”

Clara listened with marked attention, and her mother was highly gratified.

Thinking she had produced a slight effect, Lady Delaunay pursued her endeavours, and sought to frighten her daughter into conversion, by referring, among other offences, to any supposed violation of the marriage-vow, which, though it might have been pronounced, according to her present belief, in a heretic church, and before a heretic clergyman, she declared was binding on any person's conscience. Still, the previous manifestation of Clara's impatience at the least allusion to her own acts, restrained her mother from animadverting on this particular transgression, except hypothetically.

“To those,” continued Lady Delaunay, “who are labouring under a reproachful conscience, how supremely comforting is it, in our church, to be absolved and set at peace with heaven, by

a priest authorised by His Holiness, to grant forgiveness of sin, on receiving plenary confession."

It has often been observed that none are so active as proselytes in making proselytes.

"I suspect," said Clara, whose irritation had passed away, "I suspect that, in the words which have just fallen from your lips, you are making, not a supposititious, but a real, allusion ; which allusion, I believe, is to me. Well ! I must be content to bear my load. But remember, mother, you were against my marriage with Mr. Leicester, to which I consented solely to save my father from ruin, though my heart rebelled against the match. Make allowance for me, I implore you."

"I do, I do, my child," replied Lady De-launay. "Still, your lapse is, as yet, unatoned ; and nowhere can you be washed clear from the stain, unless you seek expiation in our immaculate church. Were you to become one of us,

you might obtain absolution, and be at peace henceforth."

Clara seemed absorbed by deep meditation ; and this strengthened in her mother's mind, the already-begotten hope of success.

Dinner passed without the presence of Martha ; after which, to propitiate her daughter, Lady Delaunay expressed an anxious wish to see the child.

Clara was just on the point of ringing for Martha, and asking her to bring the infant, when a carriage drove up to the gate, and Grace, the human divinity, appeared.

Not wishing, at this precise moment, to see the Countess, Lady Delaunay left the room, and sought Mrs. Gellscrust.

CHAPTER XV.

GRACE'S VISIT.—LADY DELAUNAY AND THE
OLD HOUSEKEEPER.

OH, what a balm it was to Clara's heart to see Grace—the simply pious Grace—Grace, who extenuated human frailty when it did not proceed from obduracy—Grace, the compassionate, who “loved her neighbour as herself,”—and who humbly obeyed the teaching of Him who told the story of the Good Samaritan. ‘ Grace was no casuist, no professed theologian, no polemic ; but she had learned her duty from Christ,

and devoutly, and without pride, obeyed it. May the blessings of Heaven be on her ! For Grace, though now moving in a fiction, has her living prototype.

The presence of Grace was, indeed, a solace to Clara. But Clara could not shake off the thoughts which had been evoked in the interview with her mother. Feelings of shame were called forth—agonizing reflections, leading to terrible commotion of conscience, and rendered more oppressive by an announcement that relief could be obtained only by apostacy from the religion of her earliest days.

“Clara,” said Grace, in her melodious voice, which it was a blessing to hear, “why are you so abstracted ? Have you met with any new evil ? If so, tell me, dearest. Let your cousin know what disturbs you.”

“I am not happy, Grace,” responded Clara. “The good spirits in which you left me when you were last here, and which could be attri-

butable only to your kind and healing conversation, have forsaken me. My mother, whom I have not seen for years, has traced me out, partly by accident, partly by design, and is, at this moment, in my house."

"Dear Lady Delaunay!" exclaimed Grace. "How happy I shall be to see her! Where is she?"

"With Martha, I believe," replied Clara.

"But why," pursued Grace, "do you connect your present dejection with the presence of your mother?"

This was a question which could not easily, in the existing circumstances, be answered. Clara writhed under it, and said, evasively—

"My mother has been raking up old family grievances; and the retrospect has disquieted me."

"I do not wonder at that," returned Grace. "Still, as these calamities are over, and no good can be done in respect of them, present repining

is useless. Cheer up, my dear Clara. Enjoy the comforts now in your power. I will see Lady Delaunay, and tell her not to disturb your present serenity."

"Thank you," said Clara, with a sigh.

"Come, come," pursued Grace, "I must have no sighing. We, all of us, have lately had enough of that painful suspiration. At present we should revel in smiles and bright thoughts. Let us go to the music-room. Your mother and Martha are, no doubt, busily engaged in talk concerning other days. This is the inevitable tendency of age."

Mrs. Gellscrust and her former mistress were, indeed, occupied in conversation; but it was not retrospective. No memory of past time arose in the mind of Lady Delaunay, whose thoughts and discourse were monopolized by one subject, namely, her new religion, and the danger of the faith in which she had been educated.

"Martha," said she, "bring me those volumes

of Sterne's sermons which I gave you with the other books."

"Yes, my Lady," replied Mrs. Gellscrust. "I am not surprised that you wish to read them again. They are blessed discourses, which, in the long winter nights during my seclusion, when the frost and snow forbade much intercourse with one's fellow-creatures, were most edifying and hallowed companions. At such dreary seasons, Sterne's interpretations of the scriptural texts chosen by him, have enlarged my mind, and carried it upwards, even to the gates of heaven. The religion of this writer bears a cheerful face ; it teaches universal love to mankind, and adoration of the Creator. I have never read any other of Sterne's writings. Your Ladyship will be glad to renew your acquaintance with his sermon on ——"

"Give me the volumes!" impatiently exclaimed Lady Delaunay, putting an abrupt stop to any further display of poor Martha's admira-

tion. "Let me hear no more of your comments, Martha. You presume too much in giving your opinion on the subject of divinity, of which you know nothing."

Martha was amazed. She had never before heard her mistress in this mood. "What can her Ladyship mean?" thought she, as she handed the books to her.

"You shall see these volumes no more, Martha," said Lady Delaunay. "I will not be accessory to the condemnation of a human soul."

On hearing these words, the bewilderment of the old housekeeper grew stronger and stronger; more especially as her Ladyship used to extol the plain and eloquent teaching of Sterne in his sermons.

"I beg your pardon, my Lady," said Mrs. Gellscrust, "but it was at your express recommendation that I read these very discourses, which, I repeat, have comforted my heart by their practical and unbigoted doctrine."

“ Say no more, Martha,” retorted Lady Delaunay. “ Sterne is a mere buffoon—a zany—a heretic, a heretic !”

Lady Delaunay might possibly have remembered how Sterne, in his “ Tristram Shandy,” lays about him, right and left, as the prize-fighters say, against Roman Catholics ; though it is not easy to imagine that her Ladyship could have read such a book, wonderfully able as it is.

Martha looked earnestly at her old mistress, being doubtful whether, at that precise moment, her Ladyship was exactly right in her intellect. In a little time, however, the word “ heretic” caused another turn of thought. It is a word not commonly used among Protestants ; and Martha began to suspect that Lady Delaunay had gone over to the Romish faith. This, in the old housekeeper’s opinion, would account for the change in her Ladyship’s demeanour—a change which Martha imagined was for the worse. Her mistress did not seem to

be at peace. She was irritable, and subject to impulses that could not but be painful to her.

It often happens that desertion from a belief in which one has been brought up from the cradle—whether from protestantism to popery, or from popery to protestantism—is injurious to placidity. Old associations are roughly torn asunder: the sweet and loving retrospects to early life and early friends and early scenes of innocent enjoyment, are poisoned. The catholic who has abjured his faith and joined the Church of England, has renounced, in some measure, his early affections: he must think of his kindred and his former intimates with a religious grudge, “the worst,” says Sterne, “of all grudges.” He has fears for them, without the most remote necessity for alarm. And the same may be said of the deserter from the English church. When shall we all learn the best of religious lessons—to love one another?

Martha, with tears, when she was alone, deplored the change which had come over the mistress she had always respected and loved. "Whatever she may now believe," thought the good old woman, "it is plain she is not happy. But why should she aim at making others as miserable as herself? If she has been talking in this way to her daughter, I foresee an end to all the poor, afflicted lady's chance of relief from her sufferings. Religion was, I hope, designed to confer on us not misery, but happiness."

Good Martha ! thou, unlike thy namesake in the Gospel, hast chosen the better part.

Lady Delaunay now returned to the sitting-room, and was affectionately greeted by Grace.

"Well, my dear Lady Delaunay," said the latter, "this is really a pleasure ! You must enjoy, as I do, the contemplation of Clara's happiness in this pleasant retirement, with Martha for a constant companion, and you yourself for, I trust, a frequent visitor. See, how propiti-

ously things sometimes come about even in this world. Our dear Clara," continued she, with a downward look, "has encountered much trouble. At length, however, the storm has passed away, and here she is safe and in peace. Heaven be praised!"

Lady Delaunay made no other response than by an assenting nod. Her mission, so to speak, was not to Grace, who felt somewhat disconcerted by the taciturnity of Clara's mother, thinking that if a cousin could participate in the felicity of her relative, how much larger sympathy ought to be manifested by a parent.

Not the slightest allusion was made on either side to what had passed between mother and daughter on the subject of religion.

At last, seeing that Grace had come with the intention of remaining for the evening, Lady Delaunay, who felt rather annoyed by the Countess's arrival, rose to depart, having curtsied somewhat formally to Grace, and kissed Clara,

with a promise to be with her on the following morning.

"I never had the happiness," observed Grace, when Lady Delaunay had disappeared, "to be intimately acquainted with your mother; though very early recollections induce me to think she is greatly altered. I do not mean in personal appearance; for change in that respect is inevitable. What I allude to is her demeanour, which now seems reserved and cold. Am I right?"

"I know not," replied Clara, as if the subject recalled uneasy thoughts. "My mother has had her troubles."

"No doubt," rejoined Grace, who regretted having made her first observation. "Shall we not have some music this afternoon?"

"If you please," answered Clara, with an abstracted air.

The cousins, accordingly, sat down to the piano-forte, and played a duet. But it was a failure. Nothing could be more spiritless than

Clara's execution. Her fingers, which, on previous occasions, flew nimbly over the keys, seemed now to be "stiff and numb." Her reading, too, of the notes before her was erroneous; and, though generally she was extremely fastidious as to exact delivery of the text of any great musical author, she now violated the rhythm, and even, though only for a moment, wandered out of the key.

Grace plainly saw that her cousin was not in the mood for music: her mind was not present; other considerations had borne it away; though what these were, Grace could not divine. She would not, therefore, ask Clara to sing.

"She will soon tell me," thought the Countess, "what it is that now disquiets her. I will not tease her by inquiries to-night. The secret, whatever it might be, shall transpire by her own voluntary disclosure."

Thus reflecting, Grace prepared herself for returning home. Her carriage had arrived for

her ; and bidding " Good night " to Clara and Mrs. Gellscrust, the Countess left the cottage.

On the departure of Grace, Martha timorously made some distant attempts to bring on a talk relative to the change in Lady Delaunay's disposition ; but Clara dexterously avoided them ; and, declaring she was much fatigued, sought the comfort of her pillow. Her mind, however, was still agitated by the events of the day : she could not sleep : the religious discourse of her mother clung to her : to be absolved, by authority, from her offences, was too great a boon to be neglected. " But then," thought she, " were it not better I should perish, than distress Grace by an act of apostacy ? To me she has always been frank, single-hearted, kind. Let me imitate her, and reveal, fully and without reservation, the temptation which now assails me. Yet I have not courage to acquaint her with it."

This indecision was Clara's bane, and had been so from her earliest youth. To this may

be ascribed all she had suffered. Her "fatal facility" of disposition had ruined her. She yielded to persuasion, even when she felt it to be wrong; and consented to inflict loss of reputation on herself rather than encounter a painful reality. Her present "halting between two opinions" when scruples had been awakened, was commendable, though she should have taken counsel of her friends even in this.

The next morning, Lady Delaunay was at the cottage again. She was indefatigable in her zeal, and desired, more than anything, to prevent hesitation. Clara again listened to arguments and exhortations, and was much affected when her mother said that she should have obeyed her earnest desire to go to Spain with the priest and his sister, had she not longed to ascertain whether those who, so irresistibly, had attracted her attention and curiosity on the Green, were, in reality, her daughter and Martha.

Lady Delaunay perceived that her chance of making a convert was becoming stronger and stronger.

“The hand of heaven is in this!” thought she. “I shall reclaim an erring soul.”

CHAPTER XVI.

DISINTERESTED AGENCY OF GRACE—MARTHA'S
RESOLUTIONS.

SOON after his last interview with Lady Clementsford, Tresham became fully sensible that his hopes with the heiress were at an end. During a brief interval, he had indulged in a kind of dreamy expectation that all might possibly yet come round. But at last his better sense triumphed, and he abandoned his delusion in despair.

But what was the alternative? To become

Clara's husband, and live on her pecuniary means. This, however, was not to be contemplated. His proud spirit chafed at the bare idea. "None are so blind as those who will not see," says the old proverb. Thus, Tresham still suspected that Mrs. Leicester had taken refuge with Greville for other reasons than those which were given. What he had determined to avoid from feelings of honour, or, rather, injured pride, he would still less adopt from mercenary motives.

He, therefore, left England.

On the other hand, Grace was quite sanguine in her hopes for Clara. She imagined, notwithstanding her severity of language to Tresham, that his sense of justice would ultimately induce him to reflect on their respective positions. It was still her hope that, after serious reflection, he would wish to make all the reparation in his power to the woman he had so deeply wronged. But Grace argued as her own good and generous heart wished, never once considering the impro-

bability that a man of the world, like Tresham, would be forced into an act of reparation by the suggestions of another, especially when that other was a woman.

She also fancied she had put forth very cleverly the attractions, in a pecuniary point of view, which would result from a marriage with Clara. But Grace unconsciously deceived herself. She had imperfectly executed her task, because the impatience with which Tresham had listened to any allusion to his money difficulties rendered her remarks upon that head obscure and unintelligible.

In Lady Clementsford's frequent visits to Chester cottage, she still held out hopes to Clara of a union with Tresham. But when month after month passed, and she neither heard from, nor received any intelligence of, Tresham, the anticipations of Grace were weakened, and she began to despair of "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Since the arrival from Spain of her half-sister, Conschia, the time of Grace had been much diverted from her former pursuits; and an event connected with her young Spanish relative was approaching which, by occupying no small portion of her time, would lessen her opportunities of intercourse with Clara.

It appeared strange that Grace was to become interested in another marriage. She seemed destined to be the repository of lovers' secrets.

With the frankness peculiarly characteristic of southern females, Conschia had revealed to her new-found sister her partiality for Greville. To her there appeared no indelicacy in avowing such a predilection; but, at the time when she first reposed this confidence in the Countess, Conschia was not quite sure of the intentions of Greville.

Lady Clementsford, however, was at once interested on behalf of her sister, though she feared there might be an obstacle on religious grounds. It was plain that Conschia thought

nothing of this. But Grace knew not then that difference of faith would be equally uninfluential with Greville. She trusted, nevertheless, that events would so shape themselves as to prevent a third member of the family from suffering the torments inseparable from a violation of the heart's affections. Her own agony from this cause, and the misery which Clara had suffered, did not make her callous in respect to others. She loved to see a happy human face, and could warmly enjoy the contemplation of bliss from which she herself was debarred.

Grace, therefore, lent herself, heart and soul, to the promotion of Consacia's hope, even though such aims led to a revival of her own sorrows.

Meanwhile, Lady Delaunay was able uninterruptedly to pursue her scheme relative to the conversion of Clara; and, as the visits of Grace were not now so constant as they previously had been, the mother was better able to mould her daughter to an acquiescence in her wishes.

Martha was hurt, though not offended, by her frequent exclusions from the presence of her old mistress and Clara, the idol of her heart, during their long interviews. The good old house-keeper thought that all this secrecy and mystery were ominous of misfortune. She would still, however, abide by Clara, though she longed to be again at peace in her cottage at Dalesbrook. Things had changed ever since the appearance of Lady Delaunay, who had come when events seemed ripening to felicity. The only person who seemed able to counteract this fatal tendency—the Countess of Clementsford—now rarely gladdened the house by her sweet and cheerful presence. We have seen what caused the infrequency of her visits. An ominous cloud was lowering over Clara's residence.

“Happiness is not for earth,” thought Martha. “How wrong I was, a month or two ago, to think it was within our grasp! Better would it be for me to be again at home. But I will never leave

Clara, unless she insists on leaving *me*. Lady Delaunay means to be an inmate of this house—that is plain enough. Well!—come what may, I will cling to my dear young mistress; and, what's more, in the eyes of my old mistress, I am determined to buy another set of Sterne's Sermons, regardless of her Ladyship's denunciations, though I am grieved at her new opinions, which, I fear, will not conduce to her repose."

Martha was too old to change her opinions, especially on so all-important a subject.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRESHAM'S ADVENTURES IN SYRIA—VISIT TO
THE DEAD SEA—TRESHAM'S DEATH — HIS
CONFESSIONS TO GRACE.

MELANCHOLY news from the East was on its road, destined to check, for some time, at least, all the plans of Grace in reference to her sister Conscia.

Lady Clementsford received a voluminous correspondence, which had been forwarded by a naval lieutenant to the admiralty, with an urgent request that it might be sent to its destination as speedily as possible.

Among the other papers, was a letter from the above-mentioned officer—a stranger to the Countess—announcing the death of Lord Sidney Tresham. This event was sudden and unexpected, although he had been ill some time.

After leaving England, he had proceeded direct to the East. It was ascertained that he had reached Beyrout, and that he had travelled amongst the ranges of the Lebanons to Djourni, the residence of Lady Hester Stanhope; that he had spent several days there, and been favoured with many interviews with that remarkable woman, who had been intimate with his family, and was glad to see him in her mountain home. After that, he crossed the elevated plain of Esdraelon—a vast plateau commanding views of Mount Carmel and Mount Tabor—passed through the beautiful hills of Galilee, and on to Nazareth and Jerusalem.

This information the officer had learned from Tresham himself, when he met him subsequently

at Beyrout, where he had formed his acquaintance and became connected with his sad fate.

The S***—this officer's ship—was stationed at Beyrout; and an expedition to sound the Dead Sea was proposed. The captain of the frigate said if any of his lieutenants was willing to undertake the command of such an expedition, he would allow him a boat and two seamen. Lord Sidney's new friend volunteered to conduct the exploration; and, on mentioning the design to Tresham, the latter expressed a strong desire to join the adventurous party.

Some objection was, however, raised to this by the captain, who urged that, as all the provisions, and the boat itself, must be carried overland, an additional consumer merely in the shape of a partaker of the toils, but contributing nothing else, was not exactly desirable.

In the end, however, as Tresham seemed to have set his heart on the enterprise, the request was granted: and, indeed, the expedition had

little cause for regret in the acquisition of his company, for he worked as hard as any, and rendered material assistance in an affray with certain Arabs who attacked the English party.

But the fatigues of the journey were extreme. It has been seen that it was necessary to carry the boat the whole way to the Jordan. The difficulties of this labour were endless: the men were compelled to plod onwards with their irksome burden, heavily armed, in a scorching atmosphere, tormented by thirst, bitten by mosquitoes, and perpetually annoyed by Arabs, with whom they not unfrequently came into hostile collision.

It was long before the party reached the river Jordan, where the boat was launched, to the great relief of the men who so long had borne it through a wild and rugged country.

After a wearisome and hazardous passage down the tortuous windings of the sacred stream, our adventurers entered the Dead Sea—that lake of gloom, and mystery, and silence,

and desolation. Nature, there, seems to have expired, leaving fetid vapours to poison the air, and repel the curiosity of man by irresistible dejection and disgust. The trees and bushes along the shore are blasted and dead. How they originally found root in so horrid a region is a wonder. When living animals—whether birds of the air, or beasts of the field—wander near its hideous precincts, girdled in by savage cliffs, and haunted by obstinate stillness, they look on the dreary waste, and instantly depart.

Tresham gazed on the dismal scene, and was profoundly stricken by its solemnity. His heart, which had been hardened by the luxurious dissipations of London and Paris, was here restored to its benevolent functions: if he were permitted to return to Europe, he would fulfil all that justice required at his hands; he would make amends to those whom he had injured, and look for pardon, not alone

to his human victims, but to the source where alone final pardon can be obtained.

In this awful spot the present explorers remained three days, sounding the doomed waters in different parts.

Breathing the foul and sulphureous air, Tresham, already out of health, languished ; and this—following the extreme fatigue he had already undergone—produced an attack of typhus fever. In so sad a state, he had just strength enough to reach Jerusalem. He was anxious to get on to Beyrout ; but it was not his destiny to accomplish what he had wished.

Tresham was present at a ceremony—presided over by the Bishop of Jerusalem—of consecrating the new churchyard ; and Tresham himself was one of the first occupants of that melancholy enclosure !

During his illness he expressed the most earnest wish to return to England, where he had some sacred duty to accomplish which he,

no less than his family, was anxious he should discharge.

He had written much during his bodily infliction, and his last request was that his friend, the lieutenant, would deliver or speedily forward his papers to the Countess of Clementsford.

In doing so, he availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded, to assure her Ladyship that Lord Sidney had behaved with fortitude and resignation during his illness, and had rendered the greatest assistance to the expedition by his alacrity, bravery, and extreme exertion, which, alas ! unfortunately for all parties, had cost so great a sacrifice as the loss of his life.

In Sidney Tresham's letter to Grace there was much to cause satisfaction ; and she was greatly consoled, in the midst of her grief, to think that with all his faults—to give them no harsher term now that he was dead—he had not utterly lost all

“ Compunctious visitings of nature ;”

and although the pernicious system of education had produced in him, in common with many of his class, a vicious disregard for the feelings of others, and had obliterated many qualities which, under a purer moral atmosphere, might have shone most brightly,—still his heart was not irrecoverably vitiated. He had returned at last to its dictates, and behaved in a manner such as Grace might approve in the man to whom she had given her first, pure, and only love.

Tresham prayed for her forgiveness, solemnly protesting that if he recovered from his malady and could reach England, he would marry Mrs. Leicester. A light had lately burst upon his conscience. He felt that it was only by such a step that the outrage he had committed on so many could be atoned. He earnestly desired to make full reparation to Clara, and prove to Lady Clementsford that the man she had once esteemed, was not entirely destitute of honour.

In the unrestrained fulness of these last confessions, he acknowledged that the prospect of her great wealth had, at first, attracted him ; and that, subsequently, he could not fail to admire the inestimable qualities of her mind. He owned, however, that his heart was not deeply engaged.

He had then, unfortunately for all, met Mrs. Leicester in Spain. What he had heard of her husband's heartless bearing towards her, aroused his pity ; and in a man of his habits, her perfect beauty could not fail to excite the strongest admiration. He now acknowledged to himself that Clara was the only woman he had ever loved, though his passion had been atrociously manifested by inflicting on her a selfish and nefarious wrong.

Tresham confessed, moreover, that his suspicions respecting Greville were not only unjust, but coloured in a false manner by himself to suit his own purposes. But all should be ex-

piated if he could return to England. He begged Lady Clementsford to assure Clara of this without a moment's delay ; for he now felt that, to ease *her* mind, he would give up his life.

Finally, he prayed for forgiveness both from Clara and Grace.

Tresham's communication was evidently written under a double impression ; sometimes believing he should reach England once more ; and at others, that his end was approaching.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONVERSION OF CLARA.

THE course of events must now carry us back to England.

Lady Delaunay had long been domiciliated at Chester cottage. In her intercourse with her daughter, she was doubtless animated by what her conscience told her were pure and holy designs. She aimed to secure pardon and an eternity of bliss to Clara. Notwithstanding this, however, her very presence cast a grave,

portentous shadow over a house which, until she became an inmate of it, basked in the cheerful light of happy hearts and innocent amusements.

Though, we believe, Roman Catholics are not in the least adverse to the harmless gaieties, intellectual graces, and amusements of life, but, on the contrary, promote them when they do not interfere with religious duties—witness the glorious perfection they have achieved in music, painting, poetry, and architecture—still, it so happened that Lady Delaunay's looks and the solemn tones of her voice rebuked and chilled every manifestation of joy in the abode which hitherto had been one of gladness. A coming laugh was strangled in its birth: the piano remained closed: the noble literary works of Protestant worthies dared not show themselves, being denounced as heretical; and Clara's baby was condemned to the imprisonment of the

nursery, unless when it was carried out for air by the maid and Mrs. Gellscrust.

Alas! where was Grace while this petrifying work was going on? Had a glance from *her* pierced the dreary mist in which Clara's house seemed to be enveloped, it might have resembled the sun, which, after a storm,

“ — re-issuing in the opposite sky,
Struck the all-coloured arch of his great eye :
And up the rest o' the country laughed again.”*

Unfortunately, in one of the most critical portions of Clara's life, Grace was entirely monopolised by her half sister, Conschia, whose wedding festivities, on her arrival in London, the Countess knew it would be necessary she should superintend. Greville and the Spanish lady were dependent on her good offices. She alone, of all their connections, could introduce

* Hunt's "Nymphs."

them to the circles in which they desired to appear; for the Duchess of Ellingfield still remained at Safie.

“Clara,” said Lady Delaunay, one day, “I begin to have hopes of you. The deep meditation in which you are often plunged; the earnest and intense expression of your face, and your non-indulgence in frivolous pleasures—such as waking idle sounds on the piano, and reading profane and heretical novels,—are good signs. Still, I lament to see you ‘halt between two opinions.’ Better than this would it be, at once to say you are resolved to cling to your old heresies. Hesitation is dangerous. A lukewarm faith is one of the devices of the Tempter, from whose diabolical snares none can escape, except by the protection of *our* Church. I now ask you, once for all, whether, or not, you will enter its precincts?”

“Mother,” replied Clara, “you press me too closely. This is no trifling matter.”

“It is not, indeed,” rejoined Lady Delaunay. “It is no less a matter than an eternity either of joy or misery. Think of it in that light—make your election at once; and may Heaven speed and guide you!”

“Were I to obey my present impulses,” said Clara, “I must confess I should be tempted to yield to your strong solicitation, and seize the beatitude you promise. But I know too well, by sad experience, that our impulses are apt to betray us. We often find, when our acts are beyond recall, that we have been rash; and, instead of self-congratulation, are encountered by unavailing remorse. Give me a little more time, mother.”

Now, Lady Delaunay had an insuperable dread of Grace. She felt it was, in a very great degree, owing to the long absence of the Countess from Chester cottage, that so much progress had been made in Clara’s conversion, doubtful as it still appeared. Whenever Grace

should again visit the house—and Lady Delaunay feared it from day to day—her chance with her daughter would be greatly damaged, if not wholly destroyed. Delay, therefore, might be fatal.

Under this impression, and in reply to Clara's observation, she said—

“We cannot, my dear, be too quick in renouncing error, and in embracing truth.”

“And what is truth?” quickly retorted Clara. “One alone, the Highest, can determine this. He recognizes *intention* only, and looks with indulgence on the infirmity of what we call knowledge:

‘For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.’”

“Do not, I beseech you,” said Lady Delaunay, “quote Pope. Besides, the couplet is hacknied to death, and is not altogether his own. Pope was a renegade papist—the worst

form of apostacy ; for it left him nothing to fall back upon, and consequently, he became a free-thinker. He had not even so infinitesimally small a modicum of grace as to turn Protestant. So he wrote his execrable ‘Universal Prayer,’ in which he audaciously casts aside all religion whatsoever. Never, my dear Clara, appeal to Pope as an authority in spiritual matters.”

“I do not see,” returned Clara,” why I should abstain from strengthening my own opinions by referring to those of this great author. Pope was a perfectly honest man, and the most illustrious of moral satirists. Let us not, however, diverge into criticism and controversy ; but leave such subjects to men. Meanwhile, permit me to retain the pleasure I have in reading Pope. His ‘Universal Prayer,’ in my opinion, abounds in rational piety.”

“Rational piety !” echoed Lady Delaunay, with an impatient toss of the head. “Where,

my dear, did you learn such strange words? Not from me, assuredly."

Clara did not answer; and her mother knew not exactly how to interpret her silence. In truth, Lady Delaunay feared she had lost ground with her daughter, who had not previously spoken so plainly. What plan should she adopt to subdue this newly-manifested spirit? Promptitude was absolutely necessary; for the fear of Grace's arrival loomed ominously in the distance; perhaps was actually at hand. The ground was prepared—the seed was sown. By what system of "forcing" should Clara's mother precipitate the harvest?

A sudden thought struck her.

"Clara!" exclaimed Lady Delaunay, in a kind of sacerdotal tone, "do not, I implore you, be unmindful of your present position—a woman divorced, and yet the mother of an unweaned infant! Think of this: think of its inevitable effect in the eyes of human beings;

and more, still more, consider how such an infraction of all law, divine and human, will be visited on you by the unfailing stings of remorse in your own bosom, and the horrid finger of scorn pointed towards you by your fellow-creatures."

Clara shrank from these painful words, and shuddered.

Lady Delaunay saw that a strong effect had been produced by her remonstrance, and was therefore convinced that it would be more politic to work on her daughter's *fears*, than to urge on her any of the arguments of controversial theology. In pursuance of this plan, she deepened her picture of the tribulation to which Clara, sooner or later, was condemned—a misery from which she could be delivered only by the pardon and absolution nowhere to be obtained except in the bosom of the Catholic church—the one, and indivisible—the immaculate and infallible.

“Embrace this healing faith, my dear child,” pursued Lady Delaunay, with peculiar emphasis, “and you may soon, by undoubted authority, be freed from all taint, and restored to the blessing of perfect happiness—that is, if you sin no more.’”

Clara listened with deep attention. The prospect of immunity from the throes of conscience was too precious to be disregarded ; and, after a struggle with old belief and old associations, and the tender memories of early life, she yielded.

“I am not certain, dear mother,” said she, with tearful eyes, “whether I am, or am not, acting rightly. But I give way under your persuasion. Do with me what you think fit ; I am content.”

“Come with me, then, at once,” replied Lady Delaunay, anxious to avoid any risk of a relapse into “heresy” on the part of her daughter. “There is yet time. The day

has scarcely reached noon. Come with me to the priest here in Hammersmith, who is authorised to receive into the fold, with due rites, those who have strayed from its protection."

Clara, who could no longer resist, accompanied her mother, recanted, and was duly admitted as a member of the Catholic community.

"How," thought she, when in the solitude of her own room, "can I meet Grace after this? It is my destiny always to act in the most important matters, without consulting her, my best — my most disinterested — friend. What may ensue from the present sudden step, I cannot foresee; but the throbbings of my heart seem to bode that some heavy gloom is before me. At present, it has no shape; and is the more terrible on that very account. Woe is me! I should have consulted Grace. Then, there is poor, good Martha, who has devoted

herself to me in all sincerity, single-heartedness, and perfect love, regardless of any sacrifice of her own ease. How can I look into her face and tell her *this* ?”

CHAPTER XIX.

ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO CONVERT MARTHA—
VILLAGE PSALMODY — CLARA'S DEPARTURE
FOR THE CONTINENT.

ZEAL in making converts is not easily sated. Thus, Lady Delaunay, having succeeded in her main design, namely, the change in her daughter's religion, resolved (no doubt, with good intentions) to produce, if possible, the same effect on the opinions of sincere old Martha. People, however, who have lived almost all their lives in rustic places, are less liable to mutability in matters of belief, than those who dwell in

large towns, where every kind of conviction is subject to perpetual gusts of controversy, "and nothing is, but what is not." One of the causes of this city-inconstancy of motive, probably arises from the struggle for subsistence originating in active competition. Self-interest—sometimes self-preservation—will tempt a man to desert, not only his political, but his religious, creed. Incentives of this kind are, however, very seldom operative in remote villages, and never among the aged inhabitants, by whom the stirring game of life has already been played.

Lady Delaunay, therefore, undertook a very hard task when she resolved to attempt the conversion to catholicism of good, old, English Martha. To all her former mistress's subtle persuasions she presented a firm and impregnable front. Not that she loved her revered lady less, but that she loved her ancient belief more.

"Why, you see, my Lady," said she, in answer to some of the arguments urged by Clara's

mother, "I have been brought up to worship my Creator in the protestant faith. From this, and from the expounders of it, I have derived comfort, which—even had I your Ladyship's power of language—would be altogether beyond words to express it. I have attended places of worship in village churches—holy places, sanctified by quiet—surrounded by solemn graves, where the dead speak dumbly (and this oh, mistress, is no paradox)—and where the churchyard elms and yews cast a sacred, and soothing, and peace-nursing shadow. Oh, no, my Lady! were I to renounce my faith, my heart would break."

"You talk foolishly in *substance*, Martha," responded Lady Delaunay. "You forget, or else do not know, that the old village churches about which you discourse so feelingly, are catholic edifices, and were wickedly and violently stolen from our holy community, to pamper the avarice of a nest of adventurers called 'Protest-

ants.' *Robbers* would be a fitter name ; for they sacrilegiously laid the hand of rapine on the possessions of our devout communities. You are ignorant of this important fact."

"No, my Lady ; I have more than once read statements to that effect," replied Martha. "But I have also read that when what you state occurred, the time had arrived when it was absolutely necessary to destroy what were conceived to be the harmful and shocking abuses of popery. The voice of the English people demanded this, and it was done for the good of our forefathers, and, by consequence, for *our* good. But I would rather not prolong this dispute ; for it ill becomes me to bandy words with my mistress—my good, my kind, my respected, and beloved mistress. Pray, my dear Lady, pardon the presumption of your servant, who would willingly yield up her life for you this moment ; but who cannot change the faith in which she has grown old, even at your bidding. I implicitly believe the doctrines

in which I have been brought up ; but, were they erroneous, I am too old to change. The weakness of my age makes me afraid to see the foundations of my trust shaken into ruins. Besides, my Lady, it was you yourself that nurtured my present belief, as well by your exhortations as by the books you gave me when we parted."

"Ah, those books, those books!" rejoined Lady Delaunay. "They were nearly *my* ruin, and I fear will ruin *you*, Martha. But go your way of reprobation. I have done my best to save you. With this conviction I must be content, and derive comfort from having saved my daughter."

Martha heaved a deep sigh, but did not utter a word.

Lady Delaunay now left her chair, and, in a stately pace, departed from the room.

When Martha was left alone, she resigned herself to a cogitation on the state of affairs by

which she was surrounded. She saw plainly enough that Brook Green could not much longer be a home for her. And the home at Dalesbrook—how could she any more look to that as a cherished residence, after having, in so serious a matter as religious opinion, emphatically opposed the doctrines and wishes of her who had given that pleasant cottage. Still, Martha's "savings," which, owing to the bequest made to Clara by the Earl of Clementsford, had been scarcely lessened, were sufficient to support her during the short time she had now to live.

But though the debate with her respected mistress was finally over, the mind of Martha was still agitated, heaving with convulsive throes, even as the sea heaves after a storm.

"This, indeed," thought she, "is a melancholy and distressing end to a long life of unparalleled generosity on the part of her Lady-

ship, and of gratitude on mine. Why should there ever be religious feuds? Religion should bind us together, not set one against another. Can I be sure that I am not as much to blame as my dear old mistress? I *think* not; because I cling to what I have been taught from infancy, and what I have always professed. If I am wrong, He who probes all the secrets of our hearts will make allowance for what He knows I *believe* (in my human infirmity) to be right. And the same allowance will be made for the conscientious change which circumstances have wrought on my mistress."

Martha's ruminations were here disturbed by the entrance of Lady Delaunay and Mrs. Leicester, on the appearance of whom, the old housekeeper curtsied and left the apartment.

On reaching her own room, a crowd of painful thoughts rushed into the mind of the good woman.

“I must no longer live here,” soliloquized she. “I must leave my dear young mistress and her infant, both of whom I love more than my own life. Ah, how happy we were here before Lady Delaunay came among us to unsettle and reprove our old religious opinions! How happy were we when Lady Clementsford visited us, bringing cheerful words and cheerful looks; and, by gracious acts and loving caresses on the child, realizing a bliss beyond our hopes! All now is changed! A blight has passed over us!”

And poor Martha wept in bitterness of heart.

“My adherence to the protestant church,” resumed she, in her cogitation, “*must* be right. I have no reliance on apostates. I should distrust any catholic who might desert his own faith to embrace ours. How many touching memories do I possess in connection with our English village worship! The clear, plain, practical discourses of the preachers—the rustic psalmody in which all the congregation join like

one voice—the meeting, under one roof, of rich and poor—the monitory grave-stones through which we pass into the house of God. No: I can never give up these old, endearing associations for any ceremonies, however showy or magnificent.”

Good old soul! You are right; and the sincere catholic is right also. But both are unfitted for adopting the religious forms of the other.

Martha's few words about the village psalmody are worth a thought.—“Where,” says she, “*all* the congregation join *like one voice*.” In extolling the effect of musical *unisons* in the singing of religious assemblies, the writer does not mean to under-rate the beauty and value of elaborate and intricate counter-point, or even difficult fugues, which reveal the profound secrets of harmonical science. They are not the “adulteries of art,” but its glory. In congregational worship, however, they seem out of place, and can only be delivered by a professional choir, hired for the

purpose at a certain price. Instead of this, how much more affecting and solemn is it to see *all* the worshippers, rich and poor, arise at the same moment, and join their voices in simple unisons, praising and thanking their Creator in *one* unostentatious utterance, guided only by the organ. There can be no spontaneity in involved and complicated sounds, however interesting they may be as evidences of musical science; and it is not out of irreverence to the mighty master, Handel, if we say that perhaps he exhibits too much learning in some of the fugal choruses of "The Messiah," which ought to *seem* like the unprompted burst of a multitude. Besides, musical unisons from numerous voices have a peculiar and most effective excellence of their own.*

* It is recorded of the great musician, Haydn, that during one of his visits to London, he was present at the annual meeting, at St. Paul's Cathedral, of the charity-children of the metropolis, when thousands of

We left Lady Delaunay and Clara in the sitting-room, in order to overhear old Martha's soliloquies. Let us return to the former apartment.

"Now that I have taken, in obedience to your injunctions, so important a step as the abjuration of my old faith," said Clara to her mother, "I wish to leave England for a time, and make a tour on the continent. In truth, I am reluctant to meet Grace under the present circumstances. Though I know that her charity and toleration are universal, I have not courage enough to tell her what I have done."

"It is no matter," replied Lady Delaunay,

them join in singing some of the old psalms in *unisons*. The illustrious master was greatly overcome, and fell into a passion of tears, declaring he had never, in all his life, been so deeply affected by music.

It was one of the principles of Gluck, another great and scientific German composer, that choruses should be broad, massive, and simple, so as to appear spontaneous.

“what the Countess may, or may not, think. Your conscience is no longer in *her* keeping, but is accountable only to your confessor. I approve, my dear, of your going abroad, especially if you again visit Spain ; in which case, I will furnish you with a letter to the priest, with whom, and his sister, I was an inmate, as I have already told you, in this house. My reverend friend is now at Seville.”

“Thank you, mother,” rejoined Clara. “It is not unlikely that, in the course of my wanderings, I may visit Spain ; but not at first. I shall be glad, however, of your letter, of which I shall promptly avail myself on my arrival in Seville. But shall we not take a drive to-day ?” added she, anxious to change the subject ; for she had a motive in going to the continent which she hardly dared to acknowledge even to *herself*, still less to her mother.

The present was a harassing moment in the

existence of poor Clara, to whom repose in this life seemed to be denied. Another change was at hand. Would it be the last?

When she had finally decided on this new movement, she was painfully restless till it should be accomplished. Accordingly, she once more procured passports for the continent, and was busy in ordering additions to her wardrobe. To her mother was left the disposal of Chester Cottage, unless her Ladyship should prefer to retain it as a residence. A Catholic female-servant (a foreigner) was engaged by Lady Delaunay to accompany Clara and her child.

The day of departure was at hand, and nothing now remained for Clara to do in England but bid farewell to her mother and Martha. Her valedictions to the former, would, in some degree, be more a matter of form than of emotion; for Lady Delaunay possessed a certain impassibility which, if some might envy, others

might place in a not flattering category. Perhaps spiritual pride might be its foundation.

But Martha's heart abounded in the tenderest sympathy ; and the parting with her beloved Clara, was, to her, and also to her young mistress, an agonizing sacrifice.

"Martha, dear Martha," gasped Clara, "I must leave you ; but I trust it will be only for a time. Come to my heart, my dear friend."

The two were folded by each other's arms in a long and loving embrace. Tears rained from the eyes of each, while both were clasped in that fond and speechless caress. At length, Clara tore herself from Martha's pressure, leaving the good old woman alone and almost heart-broken.

Lady Delaunay, when her daughter was gone, being resolved not to live in the same house with Mrs. Gellscrust, commissioned the latter to remain in the cottage, and endeavour to let it.

Her Ladyship then departed, and Martha and the servant were left to make the best of their loneliness. They saw no more of the "veiled lady."

CHAPTER XX.

GRACE'S SORROW—A SURPRISE—LADY CLEMENTSFORD AND MARTHA.

ALL doubts, fears, hopes, in relation to Lord Sidney Tresham were now at an end. Death had rendered futile the great object of Lady Clementsford's plans. Her heart might now confess to its owner that the rigid denial of its impulses was the work of Duty, and though its tenderness had been stifled for a time, Love had never been annihilated.

She might now own to herself how truly she had once loved Tresham. Notwithstanding the severity of her language at her last interview with him, he was the only man who had ever raised in her heart the affectionate feeling that formerly gave her exquisite pleasure—the remembrance of which consoled her through intense mortifications. She might now grieve for him sincerely, and indulge in holy meditations on his sufferings and repentance. Tresham—the object of her first and only love—among strangers in a wild and gloomy land, languishing under a grievous malady, and perishing far from kindred and friends!

The picture that her imagination conjured up, was agony. But it was assuaged by a remembrance of his deep contrition. Yes, Tresham, repentant and dead, might be treasured in her memory.

Oh, human nature, how—like an *ignis-fatuus*—you can allure and deceive! It seemed now

to Grace, in spite of Tresham's dying words, that she had really been loved by the man she had so idolized, and that he had sanctified his passion by yielding her—not to a preference for another—but to a newly-born conviction of duty. So far, however, from feeling any jealousy of Clara, she would have been perfectly content, nay, more, happy (as this narrative has already shown), had events permitted the marriage with Mrs. Leicester to take place.

The silent and sincere sorrow of Grace was the first true consolation, melancholy as it might be, in which she had permitted herself to indulge for years. Previously, her emotions had been under restraint. She had been compelled to repress all the tender feelings natural to woman, and force herself to imitate the Spartan stoicism arising from an uncompromising sense of duty.

If grief on such occasions may be termed selfish, the present was the first selfishness of which Grace had ever been guilty. She wept

for one whom she fondly considered true ; and she now permitted herself to feel—what, during Tresham's life, she would not believe—that she had truly loved him.

For many days she thought of nothing but the death of the dear one. Then she awoke to a comprehension of the sorrow of others ; and her first and most sincere duty should be that connected with her cousin.

“ Oh, Clara !” thought she, “ how much more are you to be pitied than I ! I have recovered a treasure which I had given up for lost, namely, a trust in him I loved. But from you, at the very moment happiness was in your grasp, it has fled for ever.”

Grace had not seen her cousin for some months. It is difficult to account for so long an estrangement. The foreign sister of Grace had, no doubt, strong claims on her time, especially under the interesting circumstances in which the latter was placed. Still, it might be

thought that Grace would have been able to find a day or an evening to visit Clara. Had Clara continued in her wretchedness, Grace would have been at her side ; but it is possible that, aware of her present comfort, Grace felt that her absence would not inflict any suffering.

Now, however, the Countess felt it was a paramount necessity that she should see her cousin. Accordingly, collecting all the documents received from the Admiralty, she proceeded to Chester Cottage ; and, having been admitted, Mrs. Gellscrust entered the parlour with an ominous and sorrowful expression of face.

“ Where is Clara ? ” demanded Lady Clementsford, in some alarm ; for her cousin, whenever she came, was always present to receive her.

“ Oh, Madam,” exclaimed the faithful old nurse, “ she is no longer here ! I know not where she is, except that she is not in England. She left this house soon after Lord Sidney

Tresham went abroad, commanding me, upon no account, to acquaint your Ladyship with her movements. And this, my Lady, is why I have not been to call and see you. But now I need no longer conceal the fact. Only yesterday, I received a letter from my poor, dear young mistress, telling me that all her hopes in this world were at an end, for that Lord Sidney was dead. Is this true, my Lady?"

"It is," replied Lady Clementsford; "but has Lady Delaunay gone with her daughter?"

"No, madam," replied Mrs. Gellscrust. "Ah, I cannot help attributing to my dear old mistress, who is sadly changed of late, much of the recent misery of Mrs. Leicester. Lady Delaunay has been busy in endeavours to change her daughter's faith; and I regret to inform your Ladyship that she has succeeded."

"It is much to be deplored," responded Grace. "My visit here to-day was to impart to my cousin the doleful news of Lord Sidney's

fate ; for I hoped to be of some consolation to her, by relating the signal change for the better which has been wrought on Tresham's opinions and, consequently, on his feelings. In fact, he had resolved to return home and marry the much-injured woman who had undergone such extreme misery through his former conduct."

"God be thanked !" ejaculated Martha. "How happy this would have made the dear child !"

"Have you heard from my cousin since her departure ?" inquired Lady Clementsford.

"Yes, my Lady," replied Mrs. Gellscrust. "I received a letter from her, dated Genoa, saying that she did not intend to return to England, but was, very shortly, going to Spain. She also gave me some instructions concerning the disposal of her furniture in this house. I intended to give this information to your Ladyship ; but I was so much overcome with these sad tidings, that, with the common, though

weak, delay in doing a melancholy duty, I have inexcusably procrastinated it. Pray pardon me."

"I understand your feelings, and can make allowance for them," rejoined Grace. "I myself am also to blame. Had I come here more frequently than of late, this desperate result might have been avoided."

And Grace heaved a deep sigh, not unmingled with remorse, if that might so be called which had no origin in unkind feelings.

Martha was silent for some minutes. At last she said in a faltering voice—

"As I shall have no more duty to perform here, after I have let the house, and disposed of the furniture, I shall return to my own little cottage at Dalesbrook, there to end my days in fruitless lamentation for my beloved young mistress."

"I should be only too happy," said Grace, "if you would consent to live with me at Dalzell Park; for you must feel, my dear Mrs. Gells-

crust, that we have both been labouring for the same end, and are connected by intimate ties and associations of the past."

"No, my Lady," said Mrs. Gellscrust. "I thank you with all my heart; but I wish for my own humble nest at Dalesbrook. Nothing is now left for me to think of, except how I may end my days in peace, and in remembrance of God's mercy, though some of us may have suffered greatly. Should you ever again require my services for Clara, command me, Madam. I am deeply grateful to you for your kindness to my only dearly, dearly loved, but hapless girl."

Tears were in the eyes of both these good women, as Lady Clementsford embraced the honest creature with whom she was parting. Her innate good taste withheld her from pressing the invitation on Martha, as she recognized the sincerity of the latter's refusal.

Misfortune had brought into contact these

two noble hearts, and had created a sympathy of opinion in the bosom of the stately lady and the humble attendant. A true spirit of devotion and disinterestedness had joined two good hearts, the owners of which, though of different value to the world, had been created, and equally and impartially beheld by Him who has decreed that, amongst mortals, there must ever exist a difference of class and position ; for all animals—even the birds—have their chief.

CHAPTER XXI.

A VISIT FROM THE LANDLORD TO MRS. GELLS-
CRUST AT CHESTER COTTAGE.

IT is not a pleasant thing to be a solitary dweller in a house containing sundry rooms : solitary, we say, for the servant affords little or no companionship. But the loneliness is rendered more oppressive when opposed in memory to the cheerful presence of dear friends who previously shared one's domicile and elevated and enlivened the place with wise and cordial

talk and sounds of inspired music. This, we repeat, is a dreary contrast ; and to this was Martha now subjected. Her young mistress was now wandering, she knew not whither ; the infant, which was a perpetual source of interest and delight to the good old woman, was gone too ; and Martha's heart sadly forbode that she never more should see it.

Still, Clara's excellent friend was not altogether without occupation in Chester cottage. She had her books—those never-failing comforters to the solitary ; and she was occasionally amused by the whims and humours, and unreasonable questions and requirements of those who came to look over the house, now to be let.

Clara's departure to the continent had arisen from a sudden impulse. Mr. Wilsborough, the landlord of Chester Cottage, was grievously disappointed—and, at first, rather alarmed—when he found that a bill was in the window to let

the premises. Though the rent was not in arrear, another quarter was almost due, and he was somewhat uneasy, because he had lately heard—so busy is the tongue of scandal—that his tenant had been divorced from her husband, and that she had taken his house as a place of seclusion wherein to hide her shame. This, in addition to the fact that Lady Clementsford's carriage had not been seen at the cottage for several months, induced him to believe that the *ci-devant* Mrs. Leicester was abandoned by her relations and friends.

Under these impressions—and the last mentioned was by far the most powerful—he called one morning, not in the sweetest of tempers, at the cottage, asking to see Mrs. Gellscrust.

On being shown into the room where Martha was sitting, he said,—

“You will not be surprised, madam, to see me here under the present somewhat extraordinary circumstances. I did not imagine that,

at your age, you would permit yourself to be accessory in giving a false aspect to facts when you and your friend took my house."

Martha was astounded on hearing this language. What! *she* suspected in being an accomplice in obtaining possession of a house on false pretences! The unworthy surmise must at once be beaten back with scorn. Her face was suddenly flushed; not, indeed, with the colour of shame, but of indignation.

"I will abstain," said she, "from any affectation of not understanding you, Mr. Wilsborough, for you have spoken plainly enough—*too* plainly, sir; especially as I am yet to learn your warrant for intruding on me with an accusation of this nature. To what facts have I given a false colour? I gave you my name and that of my respected and beloved friend. At your solicitation we ordered furniture of you. Have we not paid you for it? Have we not been regular in discharging our rent? Since we

have occupied this house, has it not been one of the very quietest in all the neighbourhood? Are we in debt to any tradesman? Of what do you complain? And how do you reconcile to your manhood this encroachment on a respectable woman, and these base insinuations, which she repels with contempt?"

"It is far from my intention, madam, to hurt your feelings," replied Mr. Wilsborough; "but you must please to consider that I have a character to maintain as one of the respectable inhabitants of this district."

"Maintain it, then, in heaven's name," retorted Mrs. Gellscrust, "by abstaining from unwarrantable suspicions against an old, and, at this moment, unprotected woman."

"This is all very well," rejoined the landlord; "but as you seem inclined to force me to speak plainly, let me say that in receiving, as my tenant, a young lady who I *now*, for the first time, understand has been divorced from her

husband, I unconsciously placed in jeopardy my character as an upright member of society."

"I do not see how," returned Martha. "Far from me be any attempt to justify the conduct of my dearest friend, and sometime mistress, though I may be permitted to extenuate it, by saying, that, unfortunately, she was wedded to a coarse, though wealthy, man, with whose opinions and pursuits she could have not the slightest sympathy. A time, sooner or later, will assuredly come, Mr. Wilsborough, when incompatibility of mind, temper, pursuits, and opinions, will be held as a sufficient ground of divorce, and the separated wife need not always suffer in character as she does now."

The good, simple-hearted, but acute-minded woman, here spoke from the dictates of her natural good sense. She had no knowledge, not she, that she was uttering what John Mil-

ton (the poet) laboured to establish. In the Preface to his Treatise on "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," this great man says, "If any two be but once banded in the church, let them find themselves never so mistaken in their dispositions, through any error, concealment, or misadventure—that through their different tempers, thoughts and constitutions, they can neither be to one another a remedy against loneliness, nor live in any union or contentment all their days,—yet they shall be made, spite of antipathy to fadge together, and combine, as they may, to their unspeakable weariness and despair of all sociable delight which God established to that very end. What a calamity is this! And, as the wise man, if he were alive, would sigh out, in his own phrase, what a 'sore evil is this under the sun!'"

"May be," said the landlord, in reply to Martha's observation about divorce. "But you know, my good lady," added he, with a foolish

smile, "you and I can't meddle with such matters."

"I know not why we shouldn't," answered Mrs. Gellscrust. "You ought to be aware, as a thinking man, that laws sometimes arise out of the opinions of the masses. Meanwhile, sir, if the doctrine you expressed a few minutes ago is to be maintained—that is, if as you say, a landlord must damage his character by letting a house to a divorced lady—what is to become of a woman under such circumstances? Is her punishment never to end? Is she to be a houseless wanderer for the rest of her life, in order to keep up the respectability of respectable men?"

Mr. Wilsborough could not answer these plain questions.

"But we are talking idly," resumed Mrs. Gellscrust. "The offender so much dreaded by you, in reference to your character, is gone; and I remain for no other purpose than to let

your house. Now, as I have no wish to abide here in solitude, I am willing to pay rent for the present quarter in advance, and hand you my receipts for taxes, provided you will at once take the house off our hands, and make me a fair allowance for the furniture."

The landlord, who had no doubt as to the safety of his rent for the quarter now approaching its termination, nor for the time after he should receive the notice to quit, drew a wry face at this proposal, and, after a moment's pause, unequivocally declined it.

"Consider your *respectability*, my good sir," urged Martha, with a keen glance at Mr. Wilsborough's face.

But the landlord was immoveable. According to the old saying, "A bird in the hand was better than two in the bush;" not to mention that the season, though Spring would soon arrive, was not the best time for obtaining a

new tenant. Against these considerations, "respectability" made but faint head.

"We now understand each other," said Mrs. Gellscrust. "On next quarter day I shall discharge the rent which will then be due, and give you the regular notice to quit. But I suppose I am at liberty to let the house, if I can, before that time, on your approval of the tenant."

"Certainly," replied the landlord. "But I cannot enter into any agreement at present respecting the furniture."

"Very well," rejoined Martha, as Mr. Wilsborough took his departure.

The day passed, and evening descended gloomily. Mrs. Gellscrust trimmed her fire, and sat by it in solitude surrounded by silence. Melancholy were her ruminations, as she reflected on what had passed between her and the landlord.

“How un-ending,” thought she, “are the mournful consequences of a departure from the right path! The deviation into wrong of my dear Clara will never cease to be talked of by hypocritical idlers. This man, Wilsborough, would not have breathed a word of what he has heard, had we continued tenants of his house. But now that he has lost us, he begins to talk, forsooth, of his virtue, his character, and his respectability. In one way or another, our evil deeds are sure to rise up in our path like noon-day ghosts. Oh, that Lady Delaunay had never come here! But for this, we should all have been happy; and the landlord would have had no opportunity nor inclination to talk of his outraged respectability.”

Martha now looked for consolation to her books, and, when night deepened, sought repose in her lonely chamber. But her sleep was harassed by threatening dreams about her

young mistress. In the language of Solomon, "sad visions appeared unto her with heavy countenances ;" and the good old soul suddenly, and more than once, started from sleep with a faint scream.

CHAPTER XXII.

A VISIT TO CHESTER COTTAGE OF SOME OLD
ACQUAINTANCES OF THE READER—MARTHA'S
DEPARTURE.

MARTHA awoke with the morning light, after the hours of darkness had been haunted by wild and scaring dreams. What a friend to human beings is Aurora! Night is the mother of Fear, and Doubt, and sad apprehensions, and dreary misgivings, and undeveloped terrors. But Dawn, with gradual steps, creeps up from the horizon, and then

“The spectres wan, and birds of boding cry,”

vanish, superseded by cheerful thoughts and an animated confidence.

This was felt by Martha, even while her head was on its pillow. She then slept a placid sleep, and arose a little later than usual, fully prepared for the business of the day, whatever it might be.

But, for once in a way, nothing tragical was at hand. Martha and the maid took their breakfast together, for company's sake; after which, the good old woman refreshed herself by a walk on the green.

During her perambulation, she observed a private cabriolet—in which a lady and gentleman were seated—driven in the direction of Chester Cottage. Thinking it not unlikely the strangers might have heard that the house was to be let, and were going to inspect it, Mrs. Gellscrust made the best of her way home. The unknown companions had arrived before her; and, having heard from the servant that her mistress would

certainly return from her walk in a few minutes, had seated themselves in the parlour, waiting Martha's arrival.

Mrs. Gellscrust, who, though old, was still active on her feet, soon reached the house, and went into the room containing the strangers, who politely rose on her entrance. The lady was dressed in the most ultra style of fashion then prevailing. But her costume and general bearing were more flashy than lady-like. She was, however, a fine-looking woman, with an attractive figure and a handsome face, though the latter indicated a too-abundant consciousness of her fascinations, mingled with a certain vulgar air of presumption.

The gentleman, on the contrary, was characterized by that appearance of rank and breeding which is unmistakeable, though it cannot be precisely defined. He had a military bearing, and there was a twinkle in his eyes betokening an inveterate jester. The mouth, however,—

that very significant feature—was hidden by a thick and black moustache.

It may be presumed that the simple and primitive aspect of good Martha suggested to this gentleman that she might be made the convenient victim of a hoax or two. So, addressing Mrs. Gellscrust, he said—

“We have come, madam, to look over your house, which we have heard, by telegraph, is to be let.”

“It is, sir,” replied Martha. “A bill is in the window to that effect.”

“Ah,” rejoined the gentleman, with perfect gravity, “it is not from the bill that our information is derived. The fact is that, unhappily, we are compelled to use the eyes and acquirements of others. This lady and I have never been taught to read. We have reached this distance from London because we are informed that an unusually good Seminary for the Young is established in the rather wild neigh-

bourhood to which we have now penetrated ; and we are desirous, for the purpose of education, to locate ourselves near the juvenile academy to which we allude."

Martha looked hard into the gentleman's face to detect any symptoms of insanity which might be there. But the features were composed, serious, and intelligent. She knew not what to think, and waited for some further manifestation from him.

Seeing that he had mystified the old lady, the stranger was encouraged, and pursued his inquiries.

"This seems," said he, "a very solitary place. I hope it is not subject to the incursions of savage tribes. On this point I am very anxious, my good madam ; for I am excessively timid, and should faint at the remotest approach of danger. Were it not for this lady—my wedded wife—I verily believe I should die of fear."

"Indeed, sir !" exclaimed Mrs. Gellscrust,

with a smile. "To me it seems that you might be better protected by the stout coachman and footman who attend you, than by this lady."

"In that, my dear madam, observed the gentleman, "you are altogether in error. Excepting myself, those fellows are the most notorious cowards in existence. In fact, I chose them on that very account, on receiving written certificates of their undoubted poltroonery, attested by competent witnesses. It would never do, you know, to be subject to the reproaches and sneers of one's own servants."

"Certainly not," said Martha, with a slight hesitation.

"What, as I have already said, I desire to know," pursued the gentlemen, "is, whether, in the event of our taking this cottage, we should be free from predatory attacks by wandering hordes?"

"Perfectly so," innocently answered Martha, though she was not a little astonished.

“And the seminary, my good madam,” said the stranger, fortified by Martha’s apparent simplicity, “the seminary, I trust, is quite respectable, and I tremblingly hope that no bad morals are inculcated there. You are a reverend lady, and must therefore take an interest in the purity of us young folk.”

“As to that,” replied Martha, “I can really give no opinion. All I can say is, that the seminary is kept by a most worthy person. But,” added she, endeavouring in vain to suppress a laugh, “I fear *you* would have no chance of admission.”

“You are pleased to be merry,” remarked the gentleman, with a face indicating sorrow and mortification ; “but pray recollect, my good lady, that the sad ignorance of my otherwise admirable wife and myself, entitles us to pity rather than laughter. Do not scorn the unfortunate !”

And he sighed audibly.

“What an unaccountable person !” thought Martha to herself. Then, addressing him, she said, with a keen glance, “Judging by your language, sir, I should imagine that you are not one of those unlucky gentlemen whose education has been neglected.”

“My language !” echoed the stranger. “What, then, you are pleased to approve of my English. This, indeed, is flattering ; for I am a Thessalian ; and I feared you would not understand one word I said. But you kindly re-assure me. Thessaly, you must know, is in Southern Africa, near the Cape of Good Hope. This accounts for my dark complexion.”

“I thought,” quietly observed Martha, who now thoroughly detected her visitor’s aim, “I thought Thessaly was in Northern Greece.”

“So it is,” replied the gentleman, with imperturbable demureness ; “but Greece, as you are doubtless aware, my good lady, is an African colony. And now that we are on the subject

of geography, with which you, madam, appear perfectly familiar, let me venture to ask if this remote spot—Brook Green, I believe they call it—is really, as I am informed, in the county of Essex, on the desolate borders of Northumberland.”

“No, sir, not by any means,” retorted Martha, dropping a curtsey. “It is much farther off. This place is situated on the wild shore of the Bay of Biscay. We have—though only at long intervals—dreadful tornadoes here; and sometimes the spray from the stormy coast leaves on our roofs a deposit of salt many inches thick. It encrusts our very faces. The roar of the waves is occasionally terrific at night; but, on the whole, we are free from any other horrid visitation. So, if the house should suit you, you may safely take it.”

The stranger-lady, during the latter part of her friend’s egregious banter, not being able to keep her countenance, had betaken herself to

the window, and looked out to conceal her risibility. The last sally, however, of Mrs. Gells-crust, "put a stopper"—as the phrase goes—on the hoaxer's humour. Therefore, wheeling round to his companion at the window, he whispered—

"Egad, Priscille, this old woman is too many for us."

Priscille! So our old friend, the Columbine, is again before us under new protection? But who is the gentleman? *Nous verrons*.

"I was quite sure," said Priscille, in a low voice, "that you were quizzing the ancient lady too unmercifully. Pray let us have no more of it. Besides, it won't do any longer. She is up to you. I like the house, and the situation. Address yourself to the business in hand. We are wasting time."

"Then *you* must open the discussion," replied the gentleman. "I have not yet recovered my matter-of-fact face."

"My husband," said Priscille, advancing to Mrs. Gellscrust, "is fond of a joke."

"So I perceive," answered Martha, sulkily. "He should, however, be admonished to forbear; for, some of these days, it may get him into a scrape. But I suppose he confines his witticisms to women—perhaps exclusively to *old* women. This is not very manly."

"Think no more of it," rejoined Priscille. "Let us talk about the house. Perhaps, you will be so good as to show me over it."

"Willingly," said Martha.

The two women disappeared, leaving the gentleman alone in the sitting-room.

On their return, Priscille said aside to her male companion—

"I am quite in love with the house. It will suit us admirably, and, as you know, is within an easy drive of town. The rent is moderate, the garden is pretty, and has been well kept, and the furniture is in perfectly good taste.

Besides, there is a new piano ; so that I shall be able to play to you when we are alone."

"Settle the matter as you please, Priscille, without boring me about it. I give you full authority," replied the gentleman.

"Very well," replied the *danseuse*.

Then, addressing Mrs. Gellscrust, she said—

"I take it for granted that the house is to be let as it stands—that is to say, furnished."

"No," answered Martha. "I must sell the furniture at a fair valuation, as I am going into the country, where I have a place of my own. But if the landlord will take the goods off my hands at a proper price—for you see every article is quite as good as new—he may be disposed to let the house furnished. I'll give you his address: he lives close at hand."

"Of course," observed Priscille, "the piano will go with the other things."

"No, indeed," replied Martha, with peculiar emphasis. "The piano must be removed,

should you arrange with Mr. Wilsborough to take the house."

"Ah, I see," rejoined Priscille; "it is a hired one."

"Not so," said Martha. "It is the property of a lady, now abroad, who lately was joint tenant of this cottage with me; and I shall send it back to her cousin, the Countess of Clementsford, who gave it to my friend."

Priscille could urge nothing more in reference to the instrument. So she took the landlord's address, and, with her companion, entered the carriage, and proceeded to Mr. Wilsborough's house.

Though the drive was a very short one, the gentleman found time to say—

"I overheard the old woman's allusion to Lady Clementsford and her female cousin who can be no other than the divorced Mrs. Leicester. I dare say, you have heard of Mrs. Leicester, who ran away with Lord Sidney

Tresham, and was finally deserted by him for a new love."

Priscille was not much troubled with qualms of conscience: but this sudden and unexpected allusion confused her not a little, and she rejoiced that the arrival at Mr. Wilsborough's door cut short the conversation.

The business touching the occupancy of Chester Cottage was soon settled, on the landlord receiving a card with the name on it of "The Honourable Robert Blazer, of the Blues." This, together with a reference to the Captain's army agent, proved quite satisfactory, though, as a man of the world, Mr. Wilsborough could not fail, from her appearance and demeanour, to suspect the lady's position, who, for the nonce, was invested with the "brevet rank" of the Honourable Mrs. Blazer. It was arranged that Wilsborough should re-purchase the furniture (of course at a great reduction), and charge the Captain for its use.

While this was going on, and Martha was alone, the good old soul said to herself—

“I do not like that showy, vulgar woman She a wife ! Not a bit of it. But I shouldn’t wonder if the landlord, in spite of his ‘*respectability*,’ about which he makes so much fuss, will be eager to instal her as mistress of Chester Cottage. But she shall not have the piano, to profane with flashy airs those keys which have discoursed so eloquently under the hands of my dear Clara and the Countess. I will write to Lady Clementsford, and her Ladyship shall have the instrument again.”

In the course of the morning, Mr. Wilsborough called at the cottage to say it was let to the Honourable Captain Blazer, and that, if Mrs. Gellscrust would undertake to vacate it in a week, he (the landlord) would make an allowance for that portion of the quarter which, in such case, would be unfulfilled, and buy the furniture at a fair price. To this, Martha was

happy to accede; and, accordingly, wrote the following letter to Lady Clementsford:

“ Chester Cottage, Brook Green,

“ March 2d, 1848.

“ MADAM,

“I beg to acquaint your Ladyship that Chester Cottage is let to the Honourable Captain Blazer, and a lady who passes as Mrs. Blazer. I must leave it in a week, for the new-comers are anxious for possession. The furniture has been taken at a valuation. The portion of money which I contributed to the purchase of it, was returned to me by my beloved Mrs. Leicester. What am I to do with the sum accruing from its present sale? Shall I send it to your Ladyship on Mrs. Leicester’s account?

“Mrs. Blazer (as she is called) wished much to have the piano included; but I could not listen to such an appropriation of an instrument which has been hallowed to me by the hands

of your Ladyship and my dear Mrs. Leicester. And, as I can make no use of it myself, I earnestly beg you will permit me to send it to your Ladyship's house.

“Farewell, Madam! Be pleased to receive my humble thanks for all the kindness you have showered on her whom I call my dear child; and also for the condescension you have shown to,

“Madam,

“Your Ladyship's

“Most obedient and grateful servant,

“MARTHA GELLSCRUST.”

“To the Right Honourable,
“The Countess of Clementsford.”

Lady Clementsford did not reply, by letter, to this; but, with her usual graciousness, paid a second farewell visit to the excellent old woman at the cottage. Her Ladyship, seeing how much Martha's heart was set on it, consented

to receive the piano ; though she insisted that Mrs. Gellscrust should receive for her own use whatever money should accrue from the sale of the furniture.

And thus, once more, and for ever, the Countess and Martha parted.

In a day or two, the good old soul had the happiness, not unclouded by melancholy recollections, of returning to her quiet abode at Dalesbrook, there to end her days.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SCENE IN THE CATHEDRAL OF SEVILLE.

THE hour is night; the place Seville; and through the cloisters of its magnificent cathedral, a solemn and holy procession is wending its way with slow and impressive steps. Ever and anon, grand bursts of the organ float through the air, and the chaunt of female voices, soft and clear, ring through the arches, and is lost in the distance of the lofty roof. The body of the church is crowded; and mantillas are passing and repassing, the wearers

of which strain their eager eyes towards one object.

The priests have much difficulty in getting through the throng; and the boys carrying the sacred effigies can scarcely proceed, so great is the press to see the one all-absorbing object of interest.

A nun is about to take the veil—for ever to quit the world—to bid farewell to the crowds who, at this moment, are only thinking of their own gratification in witnessing the sacrifice of a young and lovely woman.

The priests have passed; the coffin also, in which the bride of heaven is to be laid—an emblem of her death to this world. A chorus of nuns of the order of Sta. Catherine are gone forward, singing an appropriate anthem.

The crowd is now so eager and pressing to see the object of universal attention that they defeat their own purpose. Vergers are compelled, with their wands, to prevent the delicate

creature from being trampled down. But the nearest groups are more fortunate: they have caught a glimpse of her who is so soon to be lost for ever; and their exclamations prove how lovely she is.

“Que hermosa angela!” “Oh Dios, que lastima!” “Sta. Virgine, que gracia!” et cetera. But these expressions, so emphatically uttered, can in no wise convey an idea of what they saw.

Deadly pale, and seemingly borne down by the weight of her robes, glides on the victim. Clad in a garment of scarlet silk, embroidered and richly ornamented with gold, she appears too languid to walk; and, at some steps, is retarded by treading on masses of her own beautiful hair, which, in disordered coal-black bunches, shaded her delicate figure and reached to the ground. Over her shoulders and the back part of her head is cast a small white mantilla; and on her head there glittered a tiara of diamonds.

A joyous beam shot through her lustrous eyes whenever she looked up ; but her gaze, for the most part, was directed to a lovely child she was leading by the left hand. It was a girl ; but the poor infant appeared too frightened to regard aught save the dress of her companion.

As they reached the Capella Reale, where the ceremony was to take place, the audible sobs of a lady in deep mourning kneeling by the altar distracted the attention of the crowd for a moment.

None of the spectators were allowed to enter the enclosure ; and, as the procession ascended the few steps leading to the chapel, the lights shone on the victim. At this instant, the kneeling weeper raised her head, and met the glance of the devoted one. The Countess of Clementsford lowered her eyes again to the ground on clearly beholding her cousin, Clara Leicester.

Totally regardless of all about her, excepting

only her beloved relative, Lady Clementsford continued to fix her eyes on the ground. The whole of the religious procession had entered the enclosure, and the organ had already pealed forth its glorious and majestic sounds, before Grace appeared sensible of the commencement of the ceremony. Deep and fervent to those around seemed her devotion. But alas! it was not real. She knelt; her prayers were earnest in appearance; but they did not arise from her heart. Intense, oppressive thoughts filled her brain and made it dizzy with the painful nature of its imaginings. But in a church adverse to her own creed, she breathed not one devotional prayer. It is true that she moved her lips, invoking God to protect her misguided, and, as she thought, erring cousin, who, in her opinion, did not atone for her offences on earth by apostacy from her faith when the joys of the world were over.

Grace wept in bitterness of feeling, and was

so unobservant of what was going on, that the coffin was placed at her very knees before she perceived what had become of Mrs. Leicester.

The anthem had been sung, and all the imposing part of that awful rite had been said, unheard, unheeded by Grace. From this abstraction she was roused on seeing the coffin now close to her ; a dismal sight, which brought back the reality of her situation.

“ O, the sacrifice !

How ceremonious, solemn, and unearthly

It was i' the offering !”*

Grace now arose, and stood watching every movement of her cousin. She saw the crown of diamonds taken off Clara's head—her scarlet dress unlaced—a nun approaching with the scissors. But Grace stirred not : she felt choked. If all her hopes had depended on the movement of one step, she could not have

* Winter's Tale.

taken it. But had she come for this? Lady Clementsford had not travelled from England merely to gaze at a gorgeous, though doleful ceremony, at the last moment she could be permitted to speak to her cousin—her dear and only friend. But, unfortunately, she was totally helpless, and remained rooted to the ground.

In the ceremony of taking the veil, it is customary for the novice to be asked, before her hair is cut off, if she have any more ties in the world, and if she wish to bid adieu to any dear friend or relative. She is then permitted, should her answer be affirmative, to part with them, and for ever!

The Superior of the Convent of the Carmelites now made this demand of Clara; who, in reply, walked up to the railing where the lady in black had been kneeling, and, by her embrace, awoke Grace from her stupefaction.

“Grace, dearest Grace!” exclaimed Clara in a whisper, and throwing her arms around her

cousin, "how rejoiced I feel that you are the last person to whom I bid farewell ! I guessed—nay, I expected—that the angel I had wronged would come. Unwarrantable as was the idea, I felt sure you would come : yes, Grace—my only, my first friend—I was sure of *you* ! And now, in humble gratitude to my Creator, I give thanks that you are here, to impart purity to my firm intentions. You, who have passed stainless through this dreadful world—pure in heart and thought—you, whose happiness has been blighted by me, your first and dearest friend ! I—who have done you all the injury possible—torn from you, your fondest ties—I, that miserable creature, feel myself forgiven. But say it ; speak the word, and I am happy."

A suffocating sob was the only reply.

"Dearest, most beloved cousin," continued Clara, "weep not ! Speak, for Heaven's sake ! Say you forgive me for his sake whose child I now commit to your care—the testimony still

remaining of that ill-fated attachment which has ruined us all. But, dearest Grace, remember, *he* is gone! and I am soon to be buried from the world. Think not who this innocent is—reflect not on her mother's misdeeds. Take her, and never, never breathe the name of her sinful parents. Let not her days be blighted by a knowledge that her very existence depended on sin—that her mother caused the misery brought down upon so many. And when she grows up, and has forgotten the present scene, let her never know how her father died, nor how she lost her mother. Promise me *that*, Grace, and I have nothing more to wish for on this earth. I shall enter the convent gratefully.”

Lady Clementsford again tried to speak; but she felt herself unable to do so. In an instant, a thousand thoughts of the last few years flashed across her brain. Reminiscences of the happiness she had once pictured to herself, were forced upon her unwillingly. Thoughts, too, of the

unfaithful one, who was now dead, and who was the only person capable of securing for her that happiness to which she had a right to look forward.

But in justice to Grace, it must be said, that, together with these thoughts, not one jealous pang or angry feeling was entertained towards her wretched cousin, who had been the cause of all her misery, and who had dashed the cup of happiness from her lips. No ! She had forgiven all. She now loved Clara as of yore ; but the intensity of her thoughts prevented her from giving utterance to them. She, however, made a desperate effort, and at last replied in a hollow tone to her cousin's appeal—

“ Clara Leicester, my own dear cousin—my first, my fondest friend—you are forgiven from the inmost depths of my heart. May God* forgive you for what I consider to be your erring and misguided change of faith, as I have forgiven you for any injury you may have done to

me. Although you know how I have grieved that you should have taken this step—and that I consider it wrong—still I must admit, that such conduct, proceeding, as it does, from a sincere and penitent heart, is praiseworthy, and will, I hope, bring down forgiveness from above.”

Grace paused awhile, to recover from the agitation that tortured her. Then, regaining her voice, she said—

“Before you bid farewell to me, listen to my last—my sacred—promise. It would, surely, be cruel to employ these few final moments in recalling to your recollection what has led to such an extremity as the present; nor how many miserable events have been endured by both of us; the very thought of which almost prevents me from speaking. It would, I repeat, be useless and bitter to dwell upon them.

“You made me promise that I would not endeavour to induce you to change your firm,

and as you said, unalterable determination. I shall not, therefore, allude to it any more. I now pledge myself to take charge of, and protect this child as if she were mine own. I further vow, that never shall one cloud of shame pass over her brow from the knowledge of her birth. She shall learn to call me mother. And when I die, she shall be remembered as my daughter. This I promise in the sacred edifice wherein we stand. I here voluntarily make the solemn vow.

“And now, Clara, we must say farewell! If, to cheer you in your future solitude, the thought that my perpetual prayer shall be for your salvation, you may rely upon it; and also the worldly advancement of this innocent child shall be my constant object.

“Farewell, Clara, farewell! Prolong not this painful scene! Dearest friend, you are forgiven! One last embrace, and then, for ever, I say Fare thee well!”

It was said, and the cousins were strained in each other's arms. One fearful sigh was heard, and Clara Leicester returned to the altar.

Her lovely tresses were now severed from her head.

Lady Clementsford could bear no more : she turned her face away ; but the ceremony proceeded. The bride of heaven was now dressed in a white robe, and placed in the coffin. The priests moved on ; the bier was raised and carried through a side door.

From that moment, Clara Leicester was lost to the world.

It was not soon that Lady Clementsford recovered herself sufficiently to be sensible of her position.

She awoke to a new scene. Alone, in a large, and now desert Cathedral, she remembered she had nothing more to do in that edifice. Lifting the trembling child that had remained by her side, she proceeded down the steps of the

Capella Reale, and passed on through the now almost totally-darkened and deserted aisles. She raised the curtain of the door, and felt the night-air blow coldly on her face. Onward she glided carrying the child, and at length reached her hotel.

Lady Clementsford remained not long in Seville after this sad trial. Before many hours had passed, she was *en route* to Cadiz, to embark for England.

CONCLUSION.

A LAPSE of much time had now occurred since the events described in the preceding chapter.

To explain fully Clara's object in going abroad, would be no easy endeavour. She had an incoherent desire to meet Tresham again, and had traced his travels as far as Naples, from which city he had embarked for the East. Although this would not have deterred her from continuing her journey in the hope of seeing him, still the loss of all clue to his future wanderings prevented her designs.

She remained, therefore, at Naples.

Months passed. Clara then learnt of Sidney Tresham's fate, from the very ship which had been at Beyrout.

It is impossible to describe her agony on hearing such melancholy tidings.

This was the second time Clara had left England upon a vague and useless pursuit connected with Tresham ; for it may be remembered that, although Lady Clementsford had visited her once in London, and relieved her from her miserable position, still she had no further opportunity, till she heard of Clara's residence at Brook Green, of prosecuting to the full her benevolent intention, owing to Mrs. Leicester's sudden departure from Chester Cottage, and leaving no direction with any one.

It was soon after Clara's return from her first fruitless enterprise, that Greville had accidentally seen and rescued her from a more frightful plight than that from which Grace had previously delivered her.

After she heard of Tresham's death, Mrs. Leicester left Naples for Genoa, in order, as she wrote to Mrs. Gellscrust, to embark for Malaga. It was not for many months, that she commenced a correspondence with her cousin Grace.

Lady Clementsford did her utmost to dissuade her cousin from the step she meditated, of immuring herself in a convent; but the loving persuasions of Grace were of no avail. The zeal of Lady Delaunay had converted Clara to catholicism; and at Seville she was surrounded by such powerful and interested reasoners, that she remained firm to her resolve to enter a convent. It is not surprising that letters from a distance failed to prevent her.

She had but one compunction—the separation from her child. At length, even this was stifled.

On this last subject, Clara appealed, as she ever did when in difficulty, to her cousin and true friend; and this noble and devoted woman cased her mind on the subject, by promising,

as we have seen, to adopt the child as her own. But Mrs. Leicester could not consent to place this sole relic of her departed affections in mercenary hands for the purpose of being conveyed to England, and had, therefore, conjured Lady Clementsford to visit Seville for the purpose of receiving the child. This crowning act of self-denial and loving-kindness to Clara was performed with the same quiet, determined spirit that ever characterised the acts of this amiable woman.

And Clara,—poor erring, wretched sinner!—chalked out for herself a life of contrition and penitence. She left the world's doubtful attractions in the devout hope of atoning for the past in fastings and prayers; proving, at least, the sincerity of her intentions by separating herself for ever from her fond and darling child.

THE END.



Under the Especial Patronage of
HER MAJESTY & H.R.H. THE PRINCE CONSORT.

NOW READY, IN ONE VOLUME, ROYAL 8vo.,

WITH THE ARMS BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED,

Handsomely Bound, with Gilt Edges,

LODGE'S PEERAGE

AND

BARONETAGE,

For 1858.

ARRANGED AND PRINTED FROM

THE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS OF THE NOBILITY,

AND CORRECTED THROUGHOUT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE is acknowledged to be the most complete, as well as the most elegant, work of the kind that has ever appeared. As an established and authentic authority on all questions respecting the family histories, honours, and connexions of the titled aristocracy, no work has ever stood so high. It is published under the especial patronage of Her Majesty, and His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, and is annually corrected throughout, from the personal communications of the Nobility. It is the only work of its class in which, *the type being kept constantly standing*, every correction is made in its proper place to the date of publication, an advantage which gives it supremacy over all its competitors. Independently of its full and authentic information respecting the existing Peers and Baronets of the realm, the most sedulous attention is given in its pages to the collateral branches of the various noble families, and the names of many thousand individuals are introduced, which do not appear in other records of the titled classes. Nothing can exceed the facility of its arrangements, or the beauty of its typography and binding, and for its authority, correctness and embellishments, the work is justly entitled to the high place it occupies on the tables of Her Majesty and the Nobility.

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Historical View of the Peerage.	Account of the Archbishops and Bishops of England, Ireland, and the Colonies.
Parliamentary Roll of the House of Lords.	The Baronetage, alphabetically arranged.
English, Scotch, and Irish Peers, in their orders of Precedence.	Alphabetical List of Surnames assumed by members of Noble Families.
Alphabetical List of Peers of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, holding superior rank in the Scotch or Irish Peerage.	Alphabetical List of the Second Titles of Peers, usually borne by their Eldest Sons.
Alphabetical List of Scotch and Irish Peers, holding superior titles in the Peerage of Great Britain and the United Kingdom.	Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Dukes, Marquises, and Earls, who, having married Commoners, retain the title of Lady before their own Christian and their Husbands' Surnames.
A Collective List of Peers, in their order of Precedence.	Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Viscounts and Barons, who, having married Commoners, are styled Honourable Mrs; and, in case of the husband being a Baronet or Knight, Honourable Lady.
Table of Precedency among Men.	Mottoes alphabetically arranged and translated.
Table of Precedency among Women.	
The Queen and Royal Family.	
The House of Saxe Coburg-Gotha.	
Peers of the Blood Royal.	
The Peerage, alphabetically arranged.	
Families of such Extinct Peers as have left Widows or Issue.	
Alphabetical List of the Surnames of all the Peers.	

"A work which corrects all errors of former works. It is the production of a herald, we had almost said, by birth, but certainly, by profession and studies, Mr. Lodge, the Norroy King of Arms. It is a most useful publication."—*Times*.

"Lodge's Peerage must supersede all other works of the kind, for two reasons; first, it is on a better plan; and, secondly, it is better executed. We can safely pronounce it to be the readiest, the most useful, and exactest of modern works on the subject."—*Spectator*.

"This work derives great value from the high authority of Mr. Lodge. The plan is excellent."—*Literary Gazette*.

"This work should form a portion of every gentleman's library. At all times, the information which it contains, derived from official sources exclusively at the command of the author, is of importance to most classes of the community; to the antiquary it must be invaluable, for implicit reliance may be placed on its contents."—*Globe*.

"The production of Edmund Lodge, Esq., Norroy King of Arms, whose splendid Biography of Illustrious Personages stands an unrivalled specimen of historical literature, and magnificent illustration. Of Mr. Lodge's talent for the task he has undertaken, we need only appeal to his former productions. It contains the exact state of the Peerage as it now exists, with all the Collateral Branches, their Children, with all the Marriages of the different individuals connected with each family."—*John Bull*.

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET, LONDON.

TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM.



